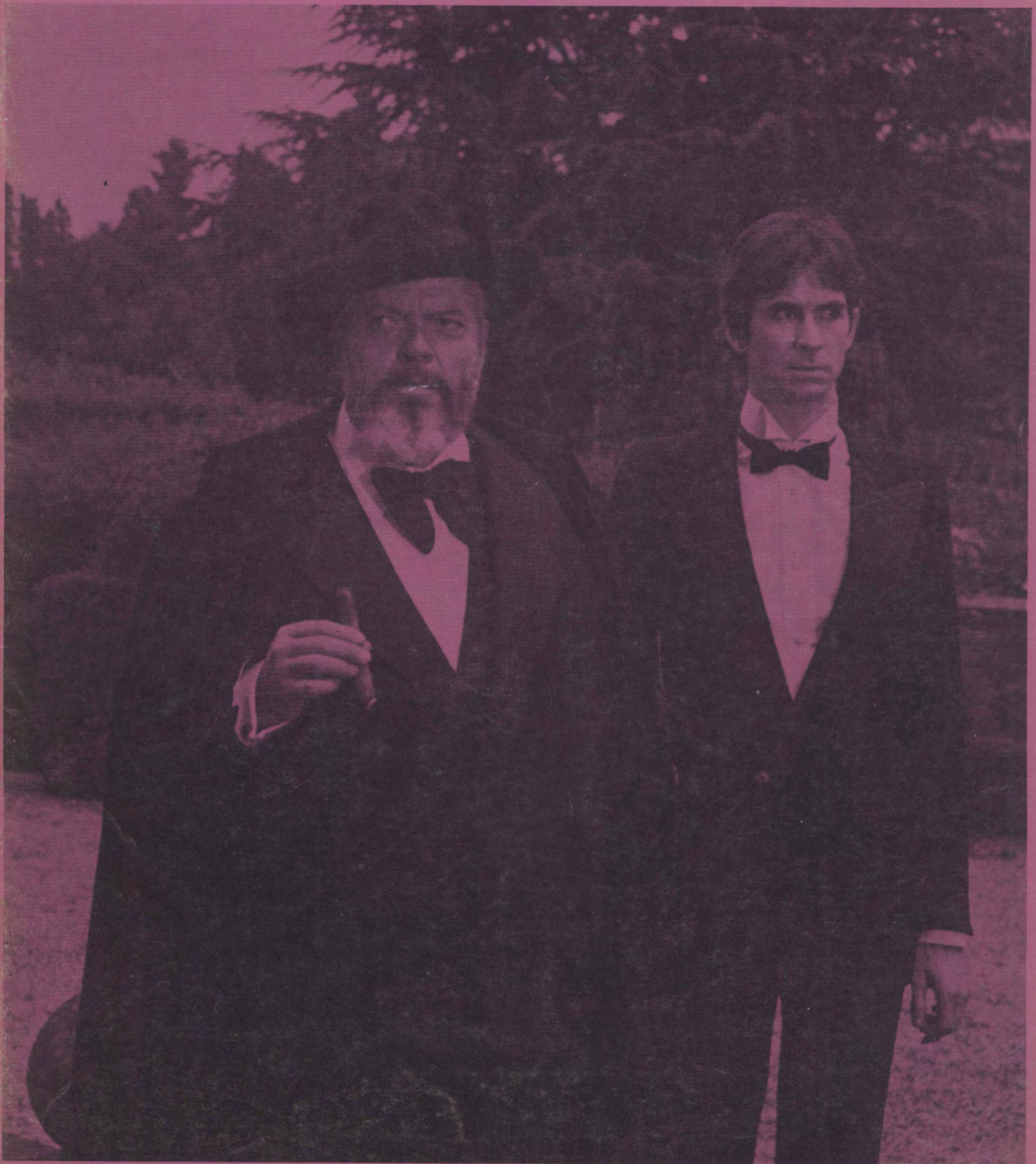


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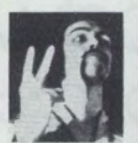
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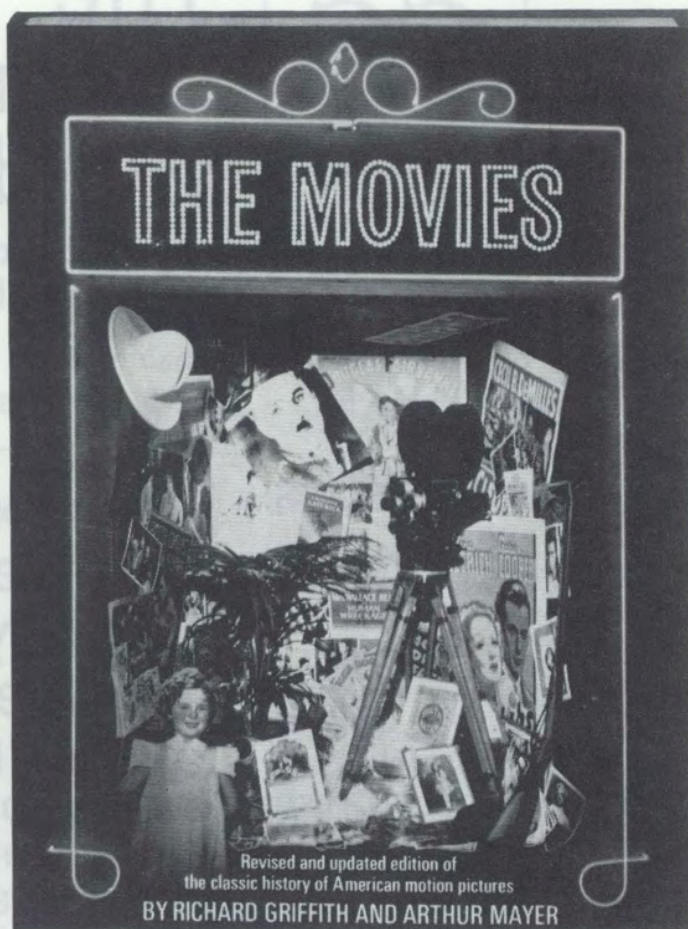
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Sight and Sound



Winter 1971/72

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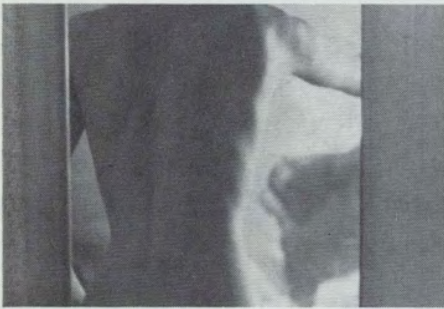
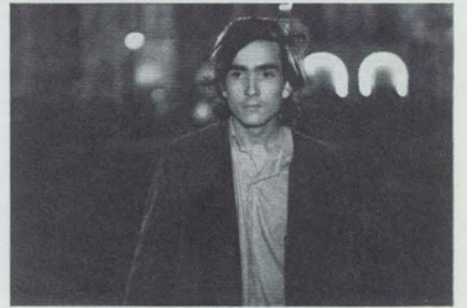
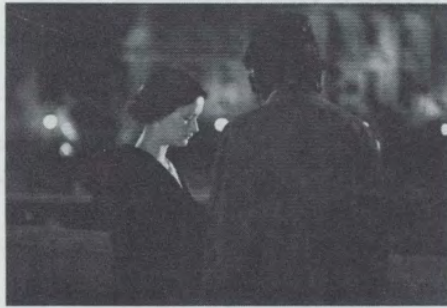
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On the cover: Orson Welles and Anthony Perkins in Chabrol's 'La Décade Prodigieuse'

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FOUR NIGHTS OF A



DREAMER

Carlos Clarens

Because it is noticeably less stark and sombre than any Bresson picture to date, *Four Nights of a Dreamer* is headed for a low place in the director's canon, and seems likely to be written off as a lesser work by one of the screen's very few practitioners of tragedy; a light rendition of a heavier, if less than classic, Dostoevsky novella. The latest Bresson is also less overtly mystical; less pre-occupied with grace, divine or human, that is, than such uncompromising works as *Pickpocket* and *Mouchette*; less strict and formal than *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, to some critics the peak film that summed up and defined the director's style. There is no denying that, in France at least, Bresson has suffered a critical decline since then. His recent Dostoevsky adaptations—*A Gentle Creature* (1969) and now this updated version of *The White Nights*—appear by contrast to the earlier films more flexible if no less controlled, perhaps due to the introduction of colour which, regardless how muted or discreetly employed, still tends to act upon one's reflexes; or the choice of performers, especially female, more attractive and less morose than is customary with Bresson; or the films' setting in a modern urban landscape, complete with intrusions from the world of television, the theatre and even non-Bressonian cinema, which renders them more accessible if scarcely less *hors temps*.

Yet, precisely by adapting the familiar Bresson language to the telling of a Dostoevsky narrative, by readjusting the author's themes to those of the director, the film sheds profuse light on the Bresson method. Bresson takes the characters of the story—the girl who waits on the bridge for her lover, the lonely young man who befriends her and finally falls in love with her, the lover who returns at the end to claim the girl—and places them in familiar Parisian territory, amid the traffic and bustle of the Pont Neuf at night. The setting seems at first one of the least likely for a Bresson picture, its contemporaneity so difficult to abstract. But Bresson's style remains lean and spare as ever. *Four Nights* enjoys no more a geographical site than did *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, where every extraneous detail, including the furniture, was pared away.

Throughout the film, an impression of milling traffic is mostly conveyed by a slightly distorted soundtrack, or an occasional dark form traversing the field of vision to blot out Marthe and Jacques from our view; a sort of punctuation subsidiary to the more formal 'chapter headings' that parcel the chronology of the tale. Steadily, the camera preserves the direction of every stare, without distractions or detours (and, consequently, without zoom shots or camera movement other than the most functional tracking); and hardly a shot is introduced without an establishing look from the characters to set up a spatial relationship between observer and object: a police car that stops nearby as Marthe stands precariously poised on the outer side of the balustrade, a sightseeing *bateau mouche* that sails under the bridge, Marthe's lover glimpsed in a crowd at the end of the film. In fact, we see only what Marthe and Jacques see, and we hear them distinctly, almost removed from their context, with traffic as a mere low obligato, and the post-synch adding to the sense of isolation.

Then, the protagonists are free to pursue their obsessions, sometimes jointly when they happen to coincide, their lives flowing

briefly together in pursuit of the dream. Jacques (Guillaume des Forêts) is a lonely painter who pours his fantasies into a tape-recorder, every girl briefly seen and followed in the street becoming a dreamlike *vis-à-vis* on tape. Deftly, Bresson solves with this one prop the problem of the internal monologue and/or the omniscient narrator. Marthe (Isabelle Weingarten) pursues in turn her obsession of faithfulness to the student who once lodged at her mother's apartment and with whom she fell in love sight unseen, through the wall as it were, through the sound of his footsteps, the books he lent to her mother, or his voice coming from behind the door of the lift cage; none of which is to be found in Dostoevsky but all of which reinforces the Bressonian concept of contiguity, of people struggling to make contact across impassable barriers of their own creation.

Like Fontaine and Joss in *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*, the priest and the old noblewoman in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, or the brief season of marital bliss in *A Gentle Creature*, Marthe and Jacques travel together, inevitably not for long. 'Give me your hand and I will see you to your home,' says Jacques formally to Marthe on their first night on the bridge, just a moment after we have seen his hand catch hold of her arm to prevent her suicide, in one of the film's telling close-ups. The cinema of Bresson is full of such gestures: they signal more than just an establishing of physical contact and seem imbued with extreme spiritual strain. One remembers the intricate hand-play in *Pickpocket*, the almost imperceptible brushing of hands between the shy lovers in *Au Hasard, Balthazar*. By contrast, *The Go-Between* and *Le Souffle au Coeur* seem almost primitive in this respect, and a film wherein a young child first discovers sexual passion through a fleeting look or a barely discernible gesture still remains to be made.

A gestural cinema cannot help being an erotic cinema, and there is an erotic side to Bresson which is rarely discussed although

richly annotated by the films themselves. *Mouchette* comes most readily to mind. This most relentless of films contains a deeply liberating moment in which the viewer is given a sense of the heroine's still undefined pleasure at being followed about by a young stranger, who even engages her in an exhilarating bump-car skirmish at a fairground attraction. In fact, an undisputed sexual content is to be found already in Agnès' top-hatted gear and dance in the much earlier *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, and it extends noticeably to the love scene in the parked car in *Balthazar*, and suffuses most of Dominique Sanda's scenes in *A Gentle Creature*. In *Four Nights of a Dreamer*, Bresson intercuts a sustained shot of the nude lovers in an almost primal bodyhold with shots of the mother fussing about outside the locked door, and there is even an overlay of the mother's voice over the entire scene. This is most deliberate, I think, and rather than infuse a spurious suspense into the scene, it underlines the precariousness of such scenes in the Bresson context, the all too rare moments of physical/spiritual contact that manage to seep through the wall of isolation. Bresson's female archetype—the vulnerable child-woman victimised by the system or established convention—remains irrecoverable to the end: Joan, Mouchette and the enigmatic, wounded 'gentle creature' go to their deaths without renouncing some personal vision.

The characters played by Anne Wiazemsky in *Balthazar* and Nicole Ladmiral in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* staunchly refuse salvation because it entails submissiveness. In his 1957 adaptation of *The White Nights*, Visconti delivers his hysterical heroine into the hands of the long-awaited lover, who becomes in the final shots no less than the death-figure of the Romantics. When Bresson allows Marthe to disappear down the Boulevard Saint-Germain on the arm of her regained lover, a myopically unromantic scholar, he is no less unflinchingly consigning her to her dream, the stuff that Jacques' own dream will be made of, the fantasy on the tape. Call it a happy ending if you wish.

Since the days when André Bazin established a metaphysical system for the Bresson films in the early 1950s, many critical theories have been put forward to account for the unique power of the deceptively simple Bresson method of film-making. They have been mostly amalgams of shoddy humanism, literary flight of fancy and pictorial or religious parallel. Now, Jean-Pierre Oudart, in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, has come up with an infelicitous term, *suture*, smacking more of surgery than of grammar, and an argument rather too abstrusely stated for *l'homme moyen culturel* (drawing as it does on large doses of Barthes and Greimas), but nevertheless establishing a structural system hinging on the relationship between field of vision (the screen) and field of viewer (an actual or potential reverse shot), and the resulting shift of value in the image from *sign* to *signifier*, between what the image *is* and what the image *acquires* by being contiguous to another (possibly non-existing) image of our own creation, thus reducing the role of voyeur in the spectator, and charging the nearly neutral image with all our subjective experience. Perhaps we

haven't come that long a way since the Kuleshov experience, but it is advisable to watch the boat/bubble/call to adventure/image in *Four Nights of a Dreamer*.

Bresson is not an easy man to interview, reserving, like all great directors, the right to a final cut. His candour in conversation is more than tempered by his wary delicacy when confronted with the written word. Many anecdotes have disappeared from the following interview: they involved technicians or directors who could possibly feel attacked—needless to say, unintentionally. I hope M. Bresson will forgive me for introducing as a passing comment the story of how he came to a parting of the ways with his cameraman, L. H. Burel (*Journal d'un Curé de Campagne, Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*), after finishing *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*. Burel had such vivid memories of Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* that he could not reconcile them with Bresson's even more austere view of the character. It seems to me that there is no doubt Dreyer's Maid is a saint and that the film is iconographical; despite Falconetti's realistic performance, she still wears her martyrdom like a crown. Bresson's Joan, on the other hand, goes to the stake unswervingly, following her compulsion, at the end of which there might be God.

You first turned to Dostoevsky for *A Gentle Creature* and returned to him for *White Nights*, which you called *Four Nights of a Dreamer*. Why?

ROBERT BRESSON: It was partly because of lack of time. Let me add that I would never dare to adapt the novels (*The Idiot*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*, etc.), which are formally perfect and complete in themselves. The two Dostoevsky stories from which I made my films are rather skimmed, but perfect for my purpose. And naturally there is always a solidity, an accuracy in Dostoevsky which permits reasonable adaptation in a comparatively short time. For *Four Nights of a Dreamer*, a sum of money was suddenly made available to me and I welcomed the chance to make a new film. At that time I was putting down on paper another project, but it still needed a whole year's work before shooting could start. I remembered then reading *White Nights* a long time ago. I immediately went back to it. In both *A Gentle Creature* and *Four Nights* I try to avoid a simple rendering. Although the films keep to the plots of Dostoevsky, I try to communicate impressions that are mine and part of my own experience.

These last two films, the Dostoevsky adaptations, seem so much more secular than your other recent films; than, for instance, *Mouchette*.

It's true that in *Mouchette* there was a musical motif of Monteverdi's Magnificat introduced at the beginning and at the end of the narrative that seemed clearly to indicate the mystical aspect. But Jacques, the hero of *Four Nights*, is so wary of the conventional world that this very mistrust becomes an almost mystical view of man. You will find it all in Dostoevsky. I invented nothing.

Yet the character emerges as pure Bresson, even to the stoop-shouldered gait which is the mark of all your heroes.

Je fais mon miel comme je peux. As for the mystical aspect of *A Gentle Creature*, there is the crucifix which appears twice in the film: the heroine at first rejects it as a useless object, only to recognise its symbolic meaning later on, when she takes her own life.

There is another aspect to *Four Nights* which is not in Dostoevsky, and that is the erotic.

Nowadays, films can show almost everything. I preferred a vertical couple standing nude and motionless, holding each other close, to the eternal scene of lovers tossing about horizontally. Also, the sense of their stillness is reinforced by the awareness of the mother moving about in the hall. I believe in the value of concentration in this respect as in every other.

And then there is a third aspect to *Four Nights*, the obsessive side, the idea of love being stronger than the love-object itself, which must have attracted you to the story. Yet it was your idea to have Marthe fall in love with the young lodger through the wall, without ever having set eyes on him.

And, of course, when they finally meet, disappointment is out of the question. This is the Dostoevsky notion of the dream overpowering reality. Also, the hero is a dreamer, a solitary young man who builds elaborate fantasies on the flimsiest realities. I thought the best way to convey his imaginary world was through the use of a tape-recorder.

Isn't that another instance of the Bresson rule that, whenever possible, sound should replace the image?

Yes, since the ear is more easily directed towards the inside, the eye towards the outside. You know how much I am for the 'inside', which I strongly believe to be the true vocation of the cinema, as opposed to theatre which remains, whatever they may say, exterior and decorative.

Would you say something about the films-within-the-film and the play-within-the-film, which are not to be found in Dostoevsky?

In *Four Nights* I profited from the chance to poke fun at a certain kind of movie: it's just a mockery of passion and romanticism, of blood and violence. I also thought that all that exaggeration would contrast with the restraint of my character, which is not really restraint but simply a refusal to indulge in theatrics. When I think that the non-acting in my films is regarded by some people as unreal and unnatural! The excerpt from *Benjamin* that you see in *A Gentle Creature*, as well as the Elysée Paramount cinema where we shot some scenes, was placed at my disposal by Mag Bodard and Paramount, respectively producer and distributor of both films. But I thought the clip would also serve a more definite purpose. It is a film that audiences accept as somewhat libidinous, and the heroine of *A Gentle Creature*, not unexpectedly, is groped by the man sitting at her side during the screening.

Also, in *A Gentle Creature*, the Hamlet performance functions variously: it introduces the notion of death and suicide both to the heroine and the viewer; then, it demonstrates that nowadays actors on stage are capable of 'splitting the ears' of an audience, against Hamlet's advice to the players 'not to overstep the modesty of

nature'. I know some people have found such a performance of *Hamlet* old-fashioned; I assure you that there is not, after all, much difference between it and current styles of play-acting. Right after the show, when the young woman in my film finds herself back at home, she reads the text of the scene to her husband, pretending that she attaches more importance to the Shakespeare tragedy than to her own. From the viewpoint of story construction, it serves further to disunite the couple.

You used to select your non-actors according to a moral rather than a physical resemblance to the characters as they exist in your mind.

In the past, this method consumed a good deal of my time. Today, I go much faster. I rather trust my instinct and believe in luck and random chance. I realise that the characters we imagine are too constructed, too consistent, while reality presents us with a great deal of contradiction and inconsistency, which are not at all perceptible to the eye but which the camera, our extraordinary instrument, will grasp gradually while shooting. In *Four Nights*, there was less time than usual to select the 'interpreters'. They were recommended to me by friends. They had no acting experience or ambition, but instead a literary or university background. Guillaume des Forêts, who plays Jacques, was a student of astrophysics and the son of a well-known writer. Isabelle, who plays Marthe, is the daughter of the playwright Roman Weingarten. She worked as a model.

Like Dominique Sanda, the heroine of *A Gentle Creature*. But don't you think that modelling is, in a way, a sort of play-acting, and that these two girls are considerably more expressive than the usual non-actress?

In Sanda's case, I knew that she would be right from the moment I spoke to her on the telephone. It was her voice which convinced me, and I simply confirmed the choice when we met the following day. As for the way in which she looked at her husband at certain moments of the film, that look which you say bespeaks all her feelings . . . well, it was nothing but a blank. This goes with the flatness of the image, so that I can express myself not through the miming of the interpreters, which is often an interference, but through the inter-relation of the images. Images, for me, exist only as signs, the sense of one modifying the next. I'm not after rupture; I'm after simultaneity which is intrinsic to the film. An image must be flat if it is to gain its value when it joins the others.

Would your paintings have the same degree of concentration as your film images?

The eye must be directed and told where to look for meaning, in paintings as in films. I like the people in my films to look at each other. I like to isolate each player and each look, and concentrate on it. A look is an unspoken word. I believe Proust said something like that.

You know my films have always seemed to me . . . how could I say it? . . . attempts, trials . . . The language of images is still so unknown, so new, so difficult to practise. ■

National Film School



Colin Young

NFS unit on location. Photo by Graham Berry

Some people wonder if we are mad. Unemployment figures in film and television are up; investment figures are down. Film education is already turning out graduates who can't find work. Is this any time to start a new film school?

It made sense to start film schools after World War II in the new socialist states which wished to rebuild their industries under national ownership. These schools did what they were supposed to—refashioned their country's cinema. The schools' effect can be measured, for graduation was almost the only way into the profession. In Hollywood to collect the Oscar for *Shop on the High Street*, Jan Kadar took the time to look back and regret that he chose to work as a grand master's assistant in 1947, rather than go to the new school starting up in Prague, which, he said, did far more than simply reproduce the old cinema.

Last November the Prague School celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Polish School at Lodz is the same age. Not so long ago in California, Alexander Groshev, Rector of the Soviet School VGIK, presented us all with pins celebrating their 50th birthday. There was no mandate like this after the war in the English-speaking countries. Canada, until recently, has relied exclusively on the National Film Board of Canada but, also until recently, has had no success in producing features. The Quebecois, as a direct consequence of their ties with France, had the earliest successes. Donald Shebib, whose *Goin' Down the Road* was named best Canadian film last year, was UCLA trained.

There are now 300 American colleges and universities doing something with film. About seventy of them give degrees. This all grew like Topsy—nobody asked it to, except the students. No industry request, no national policy. It just happened because young people wanted to make movies and put pressure on their colleges to make it

happen. The older schools (USC, UCLA and New York University) between them can now account for between one and two thousand students at any one time. The investment is extraordinary. UCLA's plant for theatre, film and television cost about \$7 million to build and equip. A new programme at Temple (in Philadelphia) is reputed to have cost \$5 million. Film and television are being democratised—no one pretends that thousands of jobs exist in the profession, but knowledge of media is no longer the privileged possession of a small number of very highly trained professionals. Taking advantage of simply operated 'sub-professional' equipment (half-inch video and Super 8mm. film), some schools are now reorganising their teaching assumptions away from studios and large complex hardware. One model being constructed at Rice University (in Houston) is deliberately aimed at students in other fields who do not expect to become film professionals, but who want to acquire the language of film for their own

work. Under carefully controlled conditions, useful films can be turned out by these students in a few months.

Elsewhere, outside the universities, there is an explosion of interest in tape as a medium. The extraordinary Raindance Corporation in New York, through their periodical *Radical Software*, spreads information and encouragement to the new generation of media freaks who think of themselves as creating an alternative communications system to the one run by the networks. George Stoney, after a time running the Film Board's Challenge for Change programme in Montreal, is now working out of New York University and has a community project in which half-inch video equipment is used to produce shows which are fed into the city's cable television system. This capability spreads to the ghettos and the Appalachian mountains.

Because of its resources, and its large, demanding population, and the widespread access of its young people to university and college training, the United States is experimenting all the time in new uses of film and tape. In much of this activity you can detect the sense of fighting back against the big producers and the commercial uses of media which was always an aspect of the

Britain's new National Film School opened in autumn 1971 at Beaconsfield Film Studios. Colin Young, Director of the School, is a Scot and was previously Professor and Chairman of UCLA's department of Theatre Arts.



National Film School unit working on 'The First Movie'. Photo: Graham Berry

early underground film movement. Now it has far more interesting implications—on the surface these are social and even political, but not very far beneath there are a number of interesting aesthetic problems as well. Some of these are raised by the possibility of two-way television, where audiences become programmers by having access to cameras and microphones, or are given the right to edit or otherwise supervise the film or programme which is made about them. The old ideas about documentary and fiction become totally blurred, as they are anyway by the ordinary workings of commercial television in the States. People line up around projects involving film and tape, and use media as catalytic agents promoting social change; they ignore the debate about propaganda and consensus television.

The new tools are not the prerogative of any one group, or any one political viewpoint—some programmes, like *Challenge for Change*, try to make them available universally. Thus is created a clear distinction between this type of 'democratising process', for which many college programmes have been unwitting precursors, and thoroughly professional training, which in the United States is offered by very few courses*.

Until Jennie Lee appointed the Lloyd Committee in 1965 to look into the need for a national film school in Great Britain, it looked as if Britain was following the same pattern as the United States by locating its film courses in general institutions. Pioneering programmes like those at the London School of Film Technique (now the London Film School—and still operating without a subsidy), the Royal College of Art, the Regent Street Polytechnic (now the Polytechnic of Central London), Bristol University and the Slade School of Art (University College, London) were being joined by smaller courses round the country at colleges of art and design, drama schools, universities and polytechnics—a lot of this assisted into being by the Education Department and other branches of the BFI.

*Graduates of U.S. film schools include: Francis Ford Coppola, Monte Hellman, Douglas Trumbull (UCLA), Michael Wadleigh (NYU), George Lucas and Irvin Kershner (USC).

The National Film School has been asked to concentrate on the training of cameramen, writers, directors and producers—people who, if they are good enough to work professionally, could create employment opportunities for others rather than be looking for work as someone else's employees.

There is no reason to repeat what most of the other courses are doing already. Most are working within an educational structure which identifies them as undergraduate courses. It follows that if the new School is not to duplicate their efforts, it must work at the post-graduate level. This is not the same as requiring a first degree for admission; it was always part of the plan that the School would be open to talented applicants without regard to their formal educational level. But with an annual intake of about 25 (rising to 50)† students, most of whom will be British, it is clear that the competition for entry will be severe and that there will be considerable advantage given to those who have managed to gain access to equipment elsewhere or who have already committed themselves by getting into the industry as apprentices or research assistants in the normal way, probably as an alternative to going to college or university. In fact the first batch of students at the School includes both types.

It should also be obvious that in a country like Britain entry into the profession cannot all be channelled through this one training scheme. The School will provide professional training for a limited number.

Its work will not and cannot occur in a vacuum. Both Government and the Industry are directly involved: Government, because it gives an annual grant to the School through the Department of Education and Science, and Industry, because it must be consulted (through the Cinematograph Films Council) before money from the so-called Eady levy can be issued as a grant to the School. This financing partnership defines the authority of the School, even though the School functions auto-

†Since it is a 3-year course, the total population in residence could ultimately be 150.

nomously through its Board of Governors. For the flow of financing to continue, the School has to satisfy the Government of the day that public money is being used wisely, and satisfy the Industry representatives of the day that British film stands to gain from the project.

In this sense, it remains a national project and must stay responsive in some sense to national and professional concerns. Grier-son's documentary group were more obviously called to public service, and they produced their best work in the course of accepting his challenge to bring Britain alive to its people. Doctors and engineers who are put through their training with public money no doubt think that the issue of public service is not raised at all. One of the most remarkable things about this new project is how little encumbrance has been placed upon it to be this or that to any particular pressure group. This freedom is to be celebrated and appreciated, but it is just as easy to argue that the real task of the School is in fact to do something for the hands that feed it and not to take support for granted.

The internal workings of the School would probably only interest other people engaged in film training, and the time to discuss our methods is when we think we have accomplished something. We intend to work as much as possible as an operating studio, with general training at first, and then gradually build on the special competence of each person. After the first year small production companies will be formed within the structure of the School and each company will undertake a programme of pictures designed to stretch or otherwise develop existing talents. These companies might shift around after the second year until the talents are compatible, and the intention will be to sustain direct contacts with professionals throughout the process, both by making strategic appointments to the staff and by encouraging close dialogue with outside professionals who are willing to team with their opposite numbers in the School. We have to create a step in the continuum. As Tony Garnett suggested the other night, not a line-up of *teachers and students*, or even *professionals and students*, but people making films at different levels squaring off with each other and reacting to each other's work. The less formal all this is, and the closer it is to the realities of creative work, the better it will be for the School and for the profession.

It is worth looking for a moment at the kind of profession they are preparing to enter. In the September 1971 issue of *Film Finance* (the quarterly journal of the Guild of Film Production Accountants and Financial Administrators) Paul Fletcher makes a familiar but crucial point. 'Throughout the sixties most of the outstanding British films . . . resulted from American enterprise and initiative . . . In the mid-sixties the total volume of production in monetary terms of the British . . . film industry was about £25 million a year, of which about £20 million came from American sources.' His guess is that the corresponding 1971 figures would be 'At about an annual level of £15 million overall, with about £4 million from British sources and £11 million from American . . .' He goes on to say that no one can pretend to be

happy with the reduction of financial strength in the British sector, but equally importantly to argue that it is not only a fresh investment of funds that is needed but a change in attitudes and practices. Since he is writing about the National Film Finance Corporation's new lending policies and its bid to establish a Finance Consortium, the practices and attitudes he is referring to are those connected with financing and distribution arrangements which, he and his colleagues have argued, make film investment too costly and too risky.

He then describes briefly the plan to have the NFFC guaranteed against loss by the British Film Fund which, as he indicates, is already investing in the future of the British industry by allocating £235,000 annually to the Children's Film Foundation and now £100,000 annually to the National Film School, out of the £4 million annually which accrues to the fund from the levy on box-office receipts. (A smaller grant is also now made to the BFI Production Board.)

These three or four dependencies on the Fund were conceived individually and worked out over a period of years. Taken together they would look very much like a rational policy—an industry planning for and protecting its future out of its income. It takes very little imagination to consider that some of the senior or graduating students of the School might aspire to work on or even produce films for the Children's Film Foundation, and might wish to look to the NFFC as at least partial investor in their early professional work.

To the extent that Film School graduates want to work in features, they must first be trained to make films within small budget limits, taking advantage of technological developments but not exploiting



Beaconsfield Studio. Photo: Ben Lewin

labour. The young French directors of the sixties knew they had to recoup in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Italy. Satyajit Ray knew he had to recoup in Bengal. The curse hanging over the British film-maker is that his language is also used in North America, and his audience is being swamped with American products which set the standards of chic and the levels of cultural and intellectual content. To deal with that competition, and to encourage the distributors and exhibitors to find you an audience, you have



Unit for 'The First Movie' filming at Penn. Photo: Graham Berry

to know the market and how to aim your picture at your proper share of that market. And you have to be good, or you won't be asked back.

A question I have kept on asking, since returning from California, is what the break-even point should be on a modest budget picture hoping to recoup its production costs in Great Britain (and perhaps Australia, New Zealand, etc.). But this is like asking how long is a piece of string. There are too many variables—the question is useful for defining these variables. A film can lose its potential audience by appearing too cheap. A minority audience picture can be too expensive for its possible share of the market. It matters little if the initial production costs of a picture can eventually be covered through 16mm. distribution if the banks are still charging interest on the outstanding balance of the debt. Nothing stands still. Heraclitus is the god of film.

Nevertheless, despite the ambiguities involved in giving a figure, the magic number of £100,000 is often mentioned (oddly enough, the equivalent figure, of \$250,000, is often quoted in the States). In the same issue of *Film Finance*, Tony Garnett shows how difficult this figure is to reach when shooting with conventional methods. A first budget for six weeks shooting on location using 35mm. comes out at over £130,000. Recalculating for Super 16mm., and assuming a saving in shooting time as a result, the budget comes down to just over the magic figure. About half the reduction comes from saving a week, the other half from savings in stock and laboratory costs. The incentive to keep costs down in this way would be to have a greater freedom in choice of subjects than otherwise would be possible.

The British cinema has to hope it also turns out film-makers who can work in a world market, and here their use of the English language is a distinct advantage. Polanski and Forman finally moved into English. Like their colleagues from the Polish and Czech schools, the films they

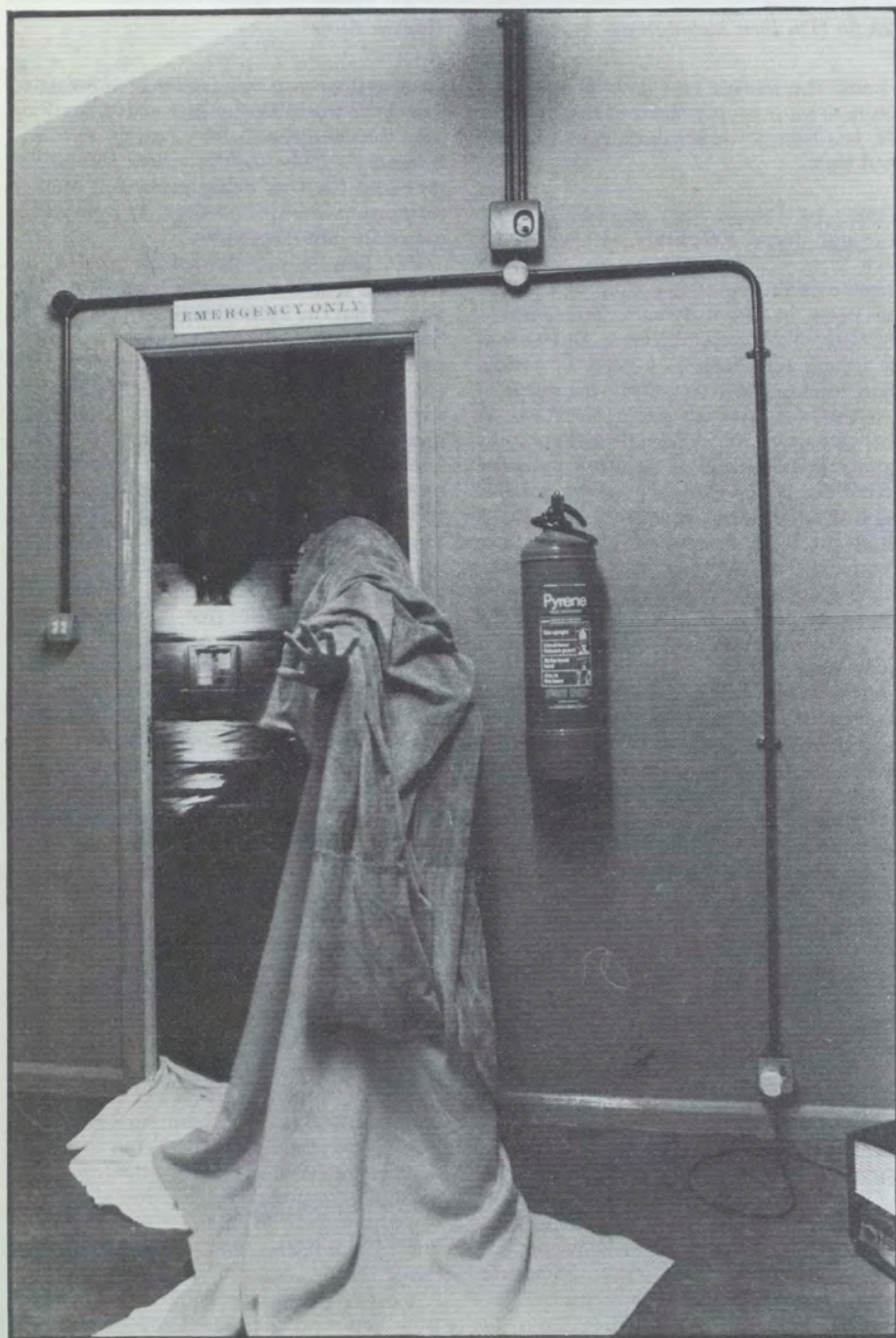
made in their own language were appreciated round the world but never reached anything like the audiences for *Taking Off* and *Rosemary's Baby*. A film school should not type-cast itself as being interested only in turning out localised product. This translates too easily into 'B pictures'.

But film is not limited to use in the cinemas. I do not have the equivalent U.K. figures, but the 1970 statistics for the United States might indicate a pattern. Feature production there was up slightly over 1969 with an increase in domestic production which was quite dramatic (27%), although many studios reported heavy operating losses. Television prime-time series episodes on film were down, but 16mm. syndication continued to grow. There were an estimated 115,000 non-theatrical titles produced—95% of which were on 16mm. (up from 89% in 1968). One of the major laboratories in Hollywood concludes that the film industry 'Will go through more and greater changes in the next ten years than in the last twenty' and that 'the total volume of film consumption will steadily increase . . . (but) will be used in patterns quite different from today's.'

Thus the School must act as more than a training company for future professionals. It has the chance to be a laboratory for the rehearsal of solutions to the problems facing the industry, and for finding new ways to reach audiences and provide services. This can only be done with the collaboration of practising professionals who will help to create flexible production methods.

Unfortunately the television companies and the cinema industry divide people into categories—current affairs, news, short subjects, drama, public relations. The freedom of movement available to artists in other media (music, painting, sculpture, literature) is hard to set up administratively—there is certainly no artistic reason for maintaining the divisions. Some few can work in and out of film and theatre, in and out of television film, cinema and commercials; but largely by retaining freelance status. Few find it possible to move freely from fiction to non-fiction and back again.

The School may be building a fool's



One of the first NFS films, so far untitled. Photo: Dennis Lowe

paradise, but it will encourage movement of that kind, both as a training discipline and a way of subjecting work done in one form to the rigours and values of the other. Perhaps the best conversation I have had about television (in one of the independent companies) since coming back to Britain came close to being bogged down in arguments between drama and documentary directors who, by and large, hated each other's work. The documentaries were too 'dull', the dramas were 'unbelievable'. The conversation went beyond that to suggest that each genre defined the limits in which the other must work. Both could be failing and at the same time could be causing problems for the other.

We continue to act as if media were hard-edged. Film and tape are administered as separate media. We used to reject or laugh at films which switched from black and white to colour or which combined animation and live action. We were told that CinemaScope had killed montage, which it hadn't, and overlooked the real gains which could come from playing down the need for editing. We are talked out of changing the shape of the frame in a movie and told that the accidental shape of the frame produced for the Edison equipment was the stuff of real cinema. We are very primitive about the movies, and haul in theories from other fields without taking the time to let cinema develop its own requirements. Our language does not even have a word for what we do when we *watch* and *listen to* a movie—something that would combine 'audience' with 'spectator'. And our critics seem to be able to deal with cinema either in terms of its content or its formal properties, but very rarely with both at once.

What is needed is a dialogue between critics and film-makers which supports the work film-makers are trying to do. The School, by being in a way a monotech, will have to import its critics and theorists. It is likely to have a very pragmatic series of criteria. Help is needed in clarifying the aesthetics of fiction and documentary (some of the reasons are clear from what has already been said), especially where these overlap. The connections between film and television need to be re-examined, both for reasons of economy, but also as a boost to the imagination. The work that social scientists are doing in cultural studies needs to be more firmly rooted in knowledge of how media operate, and film-makers need to know more about the results of such work.

Nobody knows necessarily where all this is leading. But out at Beaconsfield in the old studios occupied at one time by the Crown Film Unit and subsequently by Group 3 under John Grierson and John Baxter, where *This Sporting Life* was produced and Norman Wisdom and James Robertson Justice held sway, the first 25 students are already hard at work, under the signs that still say 'Central Office of Information Film Library' and 'Anvil Films'. The trade unions and various individuals and organisations representing management from film and television have all combined to create this School. The staff is thoroughly professional. The local pubs are happy to see us. It is an extraordinary act of faith. ■

THE MIRROR



MACHINE

George C. Stoney

Half-inch videotape rigs selling for about \$1500, first introduced to the U.S. market by Japanese manufacturers as expensive toys for the home movie buff, are having a profound effect on all types of non-theatrical film-making in New York. The other day two of us from New York University's Alternate Media Center making programmes for Cable Television met some (red) Indians in front of the Museum of Natural History, shot for an hour and looked at our 'answer print' on the subway going home. It was played back via the same 3 lb. camera and 18 lb. deck we used to record it. No lab work was needed; no synchronisation of picture and sound. We edited in the camera.

Had this been hot news we could have shown it on the air in minutes. We could have played it back on the spot, giving the Indians themselves the assurance that we were 'telling it like it is', a not inconsiderable advantage in these days of up-tight minorities. We could have erased it and recorded again, using the same \$16 roll of tape.

With a minimum of training the Indians could have made their own show, and a lot of people will be doing just that as cable TV with its multiple channel capability spreads across the country. Already there are cable systems operating in every major trading area, where some eight to ten million subscribers pay \$5 or \$6 a month so they can get interference-free reception of

up to a dozen TV channels snatched from the air by a cable company's tall community antennae. In many places they also get more old time movies, an automatic clock and weather report scanner which also carries public notices, and anything else the operator can get for little or no money that might please his subscribers and fill the several extra channels most systems provide.

We've come a long way since *Housing Problems*, that admirable British documentary made in the 1930s, gave a few slum dwellers a chance to speak for themselves despite the domination of a monster 35mm camera, a professional crew and a director fresh from the other side of town. Those of us who have spent the years between trying to find a simpler, less threatening way to introduce viewers to the viewed, even viewers to themselves, find these new little mirror machines heady stuff. We are willing to put up with limitations in editing capability, can accept the small screen size until a projection system is developed, and grow impatient with television engineers who tell us our half-inch tapes can never be relied on to produce a signal of professional quality and stability on the home set.

We reply, 'Maybe not . . . not yet . . .' shrugging away what may be major problems to be solved by the electronic engineers before every hamlet can have the same ready

access to what's happening a few miles away that they now have to what's happening in London, New York, or on the moon.

I first met videotape, the two-inch variety now standard in TV studios, back in the late 1950s, when the New York Screen Directors' Guild persuaded its members to come to classes by telling us 'this machine will make film obsolete in ten years time'. Well, Guild members are still shooting a lot of film, most of it to be *transferred* to videotape before broadcast. Despite all the advantages inherent in tape, manufacturers of professional equipment have never built systems that are truly portable. Even the smaller equipment using one-inch tape looks like, and must be operated like, the heavy, pedestal-bound electronic cameras that determined TV studio production styles three decades ago. It is as if the 1972 automobiles were still being designed as horseless carriages.

Union regulations and operating procedures have remained equally rigid. So the hand-held 16mm camera became the instrument of choice for all of us who wanted to get a little closer to reality with our documentaries for the small screen. This meant we were carrying 28 pounds of camera on our shoulders. We were tied by wire to a sound man who had his own burden of equipment to lug about. Between the 'take' and our answer print we had the lab, the sound transfer studio, and all the chores of synching, editing, negative cutting and more lab work which we had come to accept as inescapable parts of film-making. For too many of us these chores became the most important part of the job. We let them, and the professional attitudes and practices inherited from 35mm studio feature production, distance us from the people we were making films about. By and large, the people in front of the 16mm camera held by a documentary film-maker today have little more chance to express themselves honestly and freely than they did in the 30s when *Housing Problems* seemed such a breakthrough.

I first met half-inch videotape at the National Film Board of Canada in 1968, when I left the U.S. for a two-year stint as guest Executive Producer for *Challenge for Change*, a programme designed to use film as a catalyst in various social programmes to improve the lot of Indians, poor fishermen, mothers on welfare. John Kemeny, the programme's founder, and Colin Low, a brilliant film-maker and social philosopher long at the Board, had already done enough by the time I was on the scene to prove that, with care and patience and the right choice of film-makers plus the expenditure of a great deal of money, film could and did have a considerable effect 'as an agent for social change'. What was needed, obviously, was a faster, cheaper means to do the job if the technique was to be applied on a broad scale. Most important, we had to find some way for the people to take more of a hand in the film-making themselves.

The two women who persuaded us to launch our first community videotape project were no ordinary film-makers. Dorothy Henaut and Bonnie Klein brought to the task a philosophy about democratic participation that shaped every aspect of the work, from the way to run training classes to the



way editorial decisions are made. It is largely their concept, their way of working, which guides social animators, teachers and community leaders generally who are now applying *Challenge for Change* techniques across Canada.

The advantages of videotape for immediate playback to small groups were soon obvious to even the most resistant filmmaker at NFB; and most professional filmmakers are simply appalled at the whole idea of half-inch video. Nothing that easy to operate can possibly be of much worth. Distribution staff members were equally sceptical. 'Without a direct means of projection, what good is it for a larger audience?' they asked. It had taken them 30 years to make the 16mm. projector standard equipment in schools and village halls. Now we were asking them to begin an entirely new kind of distribution of an entirely new kind of reel that would require an entirely new kind of machine for playback. They were thinking in film terms, of course, not realising that the cheapness of tape made production for purely local use an affordable way to go. They were also denying the fact that the old way of distributing non-theatrical films for that larger audience had been made all but obsolete ten years before by the spread of TV.

Cable TV in Canada developed much more rapidly than in the U.S., largely because of geography and the distance between settlements. Many merchants put up community antennae because their customers couldn't get a decent signal unless this service was provided along with the set they bought. For a long time almost no one utilised the capacity these community antennae systems had for originating broadcasts themselves. But with some prodding by National Film Board representatives and local community leaders, a good many system owners were found willing to let their facilities be used by *Challenge for Change*. A series of community experiments was launched, using half-inch video as the basic tool, often augmented by 'live' programmes and film.

Today most of these community efforts are still modest ones, conducted by volunteers and backed by a National Film Board distribution field representative or a social animator paid by a university or government agency. The most successful have been in rural communities where difficulties of 'on air' reception often boost cable subscription to 80-90% of set owners, a not uncommon situation in many parts of North America. (Hilly West Virginia, the poorest state in the Union, is also the most heavily cabled, with over 60% of households subscribing.) Little money has come from the cable operators to support these efforts. They are so accustomed to filling their multiple channels with programmes pulled out of the air at no cost that they seem to regard free programming as a divine right.

A major effort to tap the cable operators' pockets for programme support was backed by the National Film Board in Thunder Bay, Ontario, two years ago when that community's cable licence was up for renewal by CRTC, Canada's regulatory body for broadcasting. 'Town Talk', a local organisation

of civic-minded people, wanted to take over the management of one cable channel, make programmes for it and be paid for their effort at the rate of one dollar a month per subscriber to be taken from the \$6 a month fee collected by the cable company.

The National Film Board spent a great deal of time and money to train the Town Talk people as film and videotape makers. They learned to edit their tapes up to one inch for more film-like cutting and greater stability of picture. In a surprisingly short time they were turning out programmes of professional quality without losing their local flavour. They won a large audience for their work throughout the viewing area. But they lost the battle. The cable company, strongly backed by their national association, fought the idea of giving up either control of programme content or the right to keep all the money it collected. The CRTC, despite considerable public pressure from all over Canada to set a different precedent for community cable use, sided with the industry.

The FCC, the American equivalent of Canada's CRTC, has been equally dominated by the broadcasting industry. In fact Cable TV itself has suffered as more and more arbitrary curbs are put on its community-serving potential by this agency. Now there is a strong possibility that engineers at the FCC will decide to make it illegal to put half-inch videotape on Cable, as it is now illegal to use half-inch on regular TV. The present half-inch systems deliver only 310 lines of information and the American 'on air' legal minimum is 525 lines. But when the signal is carried by cable the quality is already guaranteed. Most home sets can't deliver more than the 310 lines the Japanese have chosen as their standard in any case.

It is the word 'Japanese' in that last sentence that is the tip-off. Practically all half-inch equipment available in the U.S. is of Japanese manufacture. Even Ampex, the U.S. manufacturer which dominates the professional studio equipment field, has opted to distribute Japanese-made half-inch equipment instead of making its own. Now, if the Japanese start nudging the American makers of studio equipment with their home-type gadgets there could be trouble ahead. Far easier to block this with a simple government regulation saying 'no half-inch on Cable because it's sub-standard' than meet the competition of the market-place. And many a cable operator is ready to welcome such a decision as a way to avoid trouble without taking sides. As one of them remarked to me recently: 'What place has local politics got on an entertainment medium anyway? After all, we're guests in people's living rooms.'

This is not to say that every cable operator's office is being stormed by citizens hungry for access to the airways. Teleprompter, the nation's largest conglomerate with 212 franchises, is probably reflecting the dominant public mood in its current advertisements reading: *CABLE TV—The world's greatest football receiver.*

New York City is one of the few places in the U.S. where public access to Cable TV is a right, written into the 20-year agreements given to the two cable systems allowed to operate on Manhattan Island. Each has an exclusive franchise at present and the num-



Left: community camera: videotape in action

ber grows as rapidly as cable can be laid, for TV reception in this city of skyscrapers is renownedly capricious. Our Alternate Media Center in the School of the Arts at New York University is one of several makers of programmes now being shown. Funded by the Markle Foundation to be a centre for experiments in community programming, we have stuck to half-inch tape for the most part, feeling its price, its portability and its ease of operation make whatever we do with it replicable in many places that couldn't afford to operate with professional equipment.

Because channel accessibility is relatively easy, we have experimented with programming events on cable in 'real time'. For example, we telecast 33 hours of a community school weekend when teachers, parents, architects and social scientists worked for three days and nights to develop plans and strategies for an experimental school. We put on 18 hours of material made at a conference at the NYU Law School on the rights of minors, at which we recorded a running commentary on, and reactions to, the adult-dominated panels as seen by the kids themselves.

Normal TV could have done these programmes with remote hook-ups, but at a cost only such mass-approved spectacles as football games can attract advertisers to support. A brief summary is all most news editors would give them, quite enough for most viewers. But for people who would like to be present, or whom the event's sponsors would like to attract, such potted versions are no substitute. For such events we use the half-inch tape, simply bicycling it to the cable's control room on a two-hour delay.

We are also developing weekly tapes with and about people in selected neighbourhoods where there is a concentration of cable subscribers. Poor people subscribe to cable quite as readily as do the affluent, it would seem. For the price of two tickets to the movies down town you can see a choice of eight or ten movies every day of the month on your cable hook-up, and you don't have to 'get a baby-sitter or risk your life on the streets to get there', as cable operators have not hesitated to emphasise, playing up the paranoia most New Yorkers suffer from these days.

Interestingly enough, it is just this problem—the mistrust of one New Yorker for another—that has been the dominant social concern of most of our tapes to date. Our approach, as developed by Red Burns and Jackie Park, two Canadian women long resident in the U.S. but still imbued with that country's extraordinary respect for community, has been to record people's lives and concerns with relatively little stress on 'issues'.

'Video portraits' might be a good term to use for tapes our young film-makers come back with at first. Slowly they get to know their chosen neighbourhood. The people in it watch 'Channel C' on the cable and come to trust the film-makers for not manipulating the news for entertainment value. They gain self-respect as they keep seeing themselves and each other on a medium usually reserved for the famous or infamous. In time they come to speak more honestly, less defensively, about what concerns them most.

The remarkable thing is that the mere fact

of seeing on TV people whom you have lived near but not dared or bothered to know tends to reduce suspicion. An old Jewish gentleman who has been fearful of the Puerto Rican boys hanging out on the stoop can stop as he leaves the house and say, 'I saw you on TV last night'. Somehow these few words become a salutation and a compliment, taken as a friendly gesture by the receiver. A little thing, to be sure, but important in this city of invisible walls.

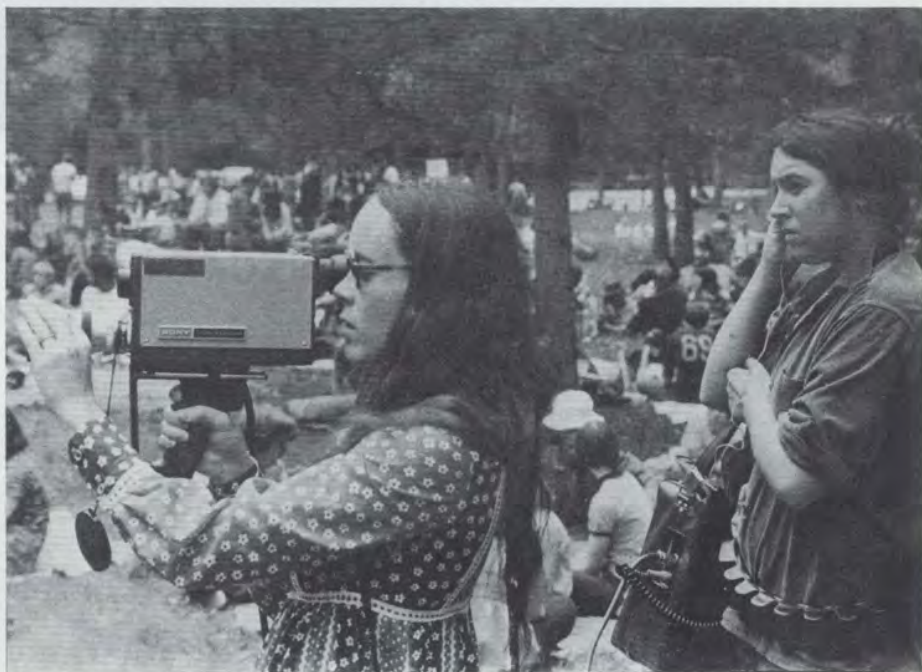
I have seen much the same technique at work in a remote mining town in Alberta and in the hills of Tennessee. New York is not the only place where such walls exist. This is a nation so dominated by commercial formula TV that 'live' entertainment, even good conversation, is often hard to find. A friend told me of a recent visit to his home town in the Middle West. Gone were the long summer evenings when grandparents, parents and children filled the front porches with songs, games and talk. Now, he said, the porches are deserted. The streets are quiet. Almost everyone is inside watching TV, each age group clustered around a different set, hypnotised by their own preferred brand of commercial entertainment. One more reason for all this effort we are making, then, is to see if TV can be turned into a stimulus for action as well as repose. Our goal is to get people involved, to get them to turn off their sets and join the living.

It should be stated in conclusion that the half-inch videotape scene in the U.S.,

particularly in New York City, is not confined to such application as I have described. Woodie and Stana Vasulka are among the many video artists whose Abstract, or Surrealist, or Dadaesque, or Videokinetic tapes are getting generous reviews in the press and shown in established museums like the Whitney and the Gallery of Modern Art. Encounter groups are into video in a big way, as are practitioners of many brands of psychotherapy. Even the pornographic market has discovered the gadget, and its facility for instant playback has stretched the possibilities for self-worship far beyond the innocent distractions known to Narcissus.

As a film teacher, I find video's advantages both obvious and almost terrifying. When everyone on the set can, in effect, look through the viewfinder via his own monitor as the shooting goes on, selection becomes almost too public an act. Maybe I was born in the wrong era, when film-making was a very personal and ego-gratifying art. Now it can also become a genuine communal effort. Asking if better films will result from all this is a bit like asking in 1860 if photography would ruin or improve the art of portrait painting. (And if that is an accurate analogy then surely film is in deep trouble.) Nonetheless, tape is here, portable at last and flexible. It can give immediate reassurance, immediate gratification. It is great fun to play with and not too awfully expensive to use. Only the very rich can say that about film. ■

Videotape camera at a rock concert in Charleston; and (below right) a 'Challenge for Change' programme in which a pub owner in Alberta films his customers.





The top ten

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)	32
La Règle du Jeu (Renoir, 1939)	28
Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925)	16
8½ (Fellini, 1963)	15
L'Avventura (Antonioni, 1960)	12
Persona (Bergman, 1967)	12
The Passion of Joan of Arc (Dreyer, 1928)	11
The General (Keaton/Bruckman, 1926)	10
The Magnificent Ambersons (Welles, 1942)	10
Ugetsu Monogatari (Mizoguchi, 1953)	9
Wild Strawberries (Bergman, 1957)	9

Voting by Directors

Orson Welles	46
Jean Renoir	41
Ingmar Bergman	37
Luis Buñuel	33
Sergei Eisenstein	29
John Ford	28
Jean-Luc Godard	28
Buster Keaton	25
Federico Fellini	23
Michelangelo Antonioni	22
Charles Chaplin	22
Carl Dreyer	22

Runners-up

The Gold Rush (Chaplin, 1925)	8	}
Hiroshima mon Amour (Resnais, 1959)		
Ikiru (Kurosawa, 1952)		
Ivan the Terrible (Eisenstein, 1943-46)		
Pierrot le Fou (Godard, 1965)		
Vertigo (Hitchcock, 1958)	7	}
La Grande Illusion (Renoir, 1937)		
Mouchette (Bresson, 1966)		
The Searchers (Ford, 1956)		
Sunrise (Murnau, 1927)		
2001: A Space Odyssey (Kubrick, 1968)		
Viridiana (Buñuel, 1961)		

The top ten, 1962

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)	22
L'Avventura (Antonioni, 1960)	20
La Règle du Jeu (Renoir, 1939)	19
Greed (von Stroheim, 1924)	17
Ugetsu Monogatari (Mizoguchi, 1953)	
Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925)	16
Bicycle Thieves (De Sica, 1949)	
Ivan the Terrible (Eisenstein, 1943-46)	14
La Terra Trema (Visconti, 1948)	
L'Atalante (Vigo, 1933)	13

TOP TEN

72

It is ten years since SIGHT AND SOUND last invited critics to play the Top Ten game. We had first done it back in 1952, when it seemed a good idea to find out what critics thought in answer to a Brussels referendum among film-makers. (On that occasion, *Bicycle Thieves*, *City Lights*, *The Gold Rush* and *Potemkin* were top four for both critics and film-makers.) In our January 1962 issue we repeated the exercise; and we felt we couldn't let this anniversary pass without staging a third round.

Obviously, Top Ten lists are best approached with trepidation or amusement by compilers and with some scepticism by readers. It's manifestly impossible to name the 'best' of anything; but it's fractionally less impossible to come up with a list of personal choices. Critics, as in 1962, were

invited to be as subjective and idiosyncratic as they chose—to list the films they would personally want to see again, or could least imagine having to live without, rather than to try to think themselves into positions of impossible objectivity. We wanted to see, among other things, how the screen classics stood up in the light of 1972, how much the international perspective might have shifted, whether the silent cinema still held its ground. (Plainly it does: three silents in the top ten this time, against only *Potemkin* and *Greed* in 1962.)

We're grateful to all our contributors, and apologetic about the affront to their sense of critical justice in that arbitrary figure of ten. 'Plus, plus, plus...' comes the repeated cry. Several people have made a point of precisely dating their lists: on another day, at another hour, the titles would be different. We also apologise to critics whose lists reached us too late for publication, though we have been able to add their votes to the main tally. Altogether, 89 critics' views are represented.

And what emerges? First, something very obvious, but perhaps worth repeating: that film really is the most international of all the arts which use the written or spoken word. It would often be difficult to guess from an individual list which continent, let alone which country, the critic came from. Though, again, there are exceptions. Amita Malik is one of several people who have pointed out the problems and restrictions on actually seeing films. 'For instance,' she writes, 'had I seen all the Buñuels my choice might not have been *Nazarin*. Having seen only *Los Olvidados* and *Nazarin*, I am putting the second in more as a vote for Buñuel.'

Again, *Citizen Kane* tops the list—astoundingly, it didn't even make the top ten back in 1952. Philip French's unnervingly accurate prediction—*Kane* and *La Règle du Jeu* out in front, *L'Avventura* and *Bicycle Thieves* off the list, and *8½* and *Persona* as likeliest newcomers—missed out only on the *L'Avventura* guess. *Kane* and *La Règle du Jeu*, respectively first and third in a close-run finish in 1962, have this time left the rest of the field standing. In general, the enormous range of individual choices reflects what one would expect: a more splintered, fragmented film culture. But in another sense that is belied by the agreement on these two films.

The final consensus is also rather strikingly on the side of the classics. In 1952 *Bicycle Thieves* (1949) topped the poll; in 1962 *L'Avventura* (1960) took second place and *Hiroshima mon Amour* (1959) led the runners-up. This time round, the only 1960s films come from Bergman and Fellini, neither of whom could exactly be called new men. In the voting, the underground remains largely underground; *Pierrot le Fou* wins out over the political Godard of recent years; and there's surprisingly little evidence of what is sometimes suggested as another mood of the times—a move away from fiction towards fact. No one, incidentally, listed a television film.

Buster Keaton was probably the great rediscovery of the 1960s, and among directors Keaton just edges past Chaplin. But if there are surprises, they are less in what's new than in some apparent re-

assessments. Dreyer has gained ground; Stroheim has lost it. Vigo, sadly, seems to have faded for the time being from the international critical consciousness: *L'Atalante* and *Zéro de Conduite*, which in 1962 collected 24 votes between them, now muster only a pitiful half-dozen.

It would be foolish to risk generalisations on the shaky evidence of this kind of poll, but it's hard to resist one or two speculative conclusions. That, allowing for every variation in outlook and taste, the 1972 list is weighted more heavily than might have been expected (no less solidly than the 1962 list) towards orthodoxy. In this country, certainly, the 1950s were the decade which opened up previously unknown areas—the discovery of Japanese and Indian cinema, the first big retrospectives at the National Film Theatre. The 1960s have produced nothing to equal, in worldwide impact, the effect of neo-realism in the 1940s or of everything summed up in the phrase 'new wave' at the end of the 1950s. The discoveries of the past decade have been of the kind that split rather than unite critical opinion; and when the votes are added agreement settles on the proven masters. The most potent word in the cinema, it seems, is still *Rosebud*.

Critics' Lists

Jan Aghed

Sweden SYDSENSKA DAGBLADET SNALLPOSTEN
My Darling Clementine, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Pierrot le Fou, Oz Fuzis (*Guerra*), Vertigo, The Wild Bunch, La Hora de los Hornos (*Solanas*), Greed, L'Atalante, The Magnificent Ambersons.

... A silly and extremely unpleasant little pastime, from which I extract myself with the above, partly no doubt ephemeral list, and profound guilt feelings towards many absentees.

Adriano Aprà

Italy FILMSTUDIO '70

Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, La Concentration (*Philippe Garrel*), Ice (*Robert Kramer*), Mare's Tail (*David Larcher*), My Hustler (*Warhol*), Nostra Signora dei Turchi (*Carmelo Bene*), Partisan Zenshi (*Noriaki Tsuchimoto*), Pierrot le Fou, He Died After the War (*Oshima*), The 'Ile aux Coudres' Trilogy (*Pierre Perrault*).

Films of the sixties made by directors of the sixties.

Francisco Aranda

Spain

L'Age d'Or, Battleship Potemkin, Citizen Kane, Monsieur Verdoux, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Paths of Glory, Tabu, La Terra Trema, Haxan (*Christensen*), You Only Live Once.

José Carlos Avellar

Brazil JORNAL DO BRASIL

Pierrot le Fou, Ivan the Terrible, The Hour of the Wolf, Terra em Transe (*Rocha*), The Last Laugh, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, Vidas Secas (*Nelson Pereira dos Santos*), Tristana, La Hora de los Hornos (*Solanas*), Pickpocket.

Gianalberto Bendazzi

Italy AVANTI!

Battleship Potemkin, Man of Aran, The Passion of Joan of Arc, A Nous la Liberté, *8½*, Citizen Kane, Au Hasard, Balthazar, It's a Wonderful Life (*Capra*), The Deserter and the Nomads

(*Jakubisko*), Pas de Deux (*McLaren*).

I give you my list not like a critic but like a spectator. These ten are the films I loved more, and the reason was silent.

Claude Beylie

France CINEMA 71

Band of Angels (*Walsh*), Birth of a Nation, A Countess from Hong Kong, Gertrud, M (*Lang*), La Règle du Jeu, Sansho Dayu, Shanghai Gesture, Sunrise, Young Mr. Lincoln.

Stig Björkman

Sweden CHAPLIN

Citizen Kane, Vertigo, Pierrot le Fou, Lola, L'Avventura, Rio Bravo, La Carrosse d'Or, Persona, Sherlock Jr., Les Vampires (*Feuillade*).

Regretfully, I have had to disregard film-makers like Buñuel and Chabrol, Lewis and Losey, Mizoguchi and Rossellini, Vertov and Vigo, or singular masterpieces like 'Freaks' or 'Night of the Hunter'.

Peter Bogdanovich

United States

Only Angels Have Wings, Young Mr. Lincoln, The Magnificent Ambersons, Red River, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, The Searchers, Rio Bravo, Touch of Evil, Vertigo, North by Northwest.

I don't have favourite movies as much as I have favourite directors—men whose company I enjoy. And it depends very much on my mood which of their various works I feel like being with; whether I want to be in the presence of Hawks in his 'Bringing Up Baby' mood or his 'Only Angels Have Wings' mood. This is, at best, a rough list based on an attempt to guess which mood I'm most often in. The order is chronological.

Jaroslav Broz

Czechoslovakia

La Notte, The Silence, The Marat/Sade, Viridiana, La Dolce Vita, Kwaidan (*Kobayashi*), 2001: A Space Odyssey, Ivan Detstvo (*Tarkovsky*), Jules et Jim, Ashes and Diamonds.

... Films of still established directors released during the last fifteen years.

Edoardo Bruno

Italy FILMCRTICA

Viaggio in Italia, The Night of the Hunter, Ivan the Terrible, The Exterminating Angel, La Nuit de Carrefour (*Renoir*), Shanghai Gesture, The Trial (*Welles*), L'Atalante, Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, Les Carabiniers.

Un programma incompleto che mi piacerebbe vedere come esempio di un 'cinema di tendenza'.

Felix Bucher

Switzerland

Les Enfants du Paradis, Citizen Kane, Man of Aran, The General, Andrei Roublev, La Marseillaise, The Last Laugh, Intolerance, *8½*, An Autumn Afternoon.

'Andrei Roublev'



Ian Cameron

Great Britain MOVIE

Adieu Philippine (*Jacques Rozier*), The Awful Truth (*McCarey*), Judex (*Franju*), North by Northwest, La Règle du Jeu, Shin Heike Monogatari (*Mizoguchi*), The Switchboard Operator, A Time to Love and a Time to Die (*Sirk*), Viva L'Italia, Wild River.

The ten films I feel I can least do without today...

Giulio Cesare Castello

Italy

Haxan (*Christensen*), Go West (*Keaton*), The Wedding March, Trouble in Paradise, Love Me Tonight, Limelight, Paths of Glory, Hiroshima mon Amour, La Dolce Vita, The Leopard (*just the ball sequence, but I would perhaps prefer a Visconti anthology including also 'Senso' and 'Death in Venice'*).

Henry Chapier

France COMBAT

America, America, Andrei Roublev, L'Année dernière à Marienbad, La Chinoise, The Damned, Fellini-Satyricon, Harakiri (*Kobayashi*), The Servant, Teorema, La Voie Lactée.



'La Voie Lactée'

Carlos Clarens

United States

La Règle du Jeu, Lola Montès, Ugetsu Monogatari, The Bandwagon, Our Hospitality, A Star is Born (*Cukor*), Persona, The Searchers, The Scarlet Empress, Psycho.

Jay Cocks

United States TIME

The General, Jules et Jim, The Magnificent Ambersons, Persona, The Searchers, The Seven Samurai, The Third Man, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Wild Bunch, Zéro de Conduite.

John Coleman

Great Britain NEW STATESMAN

Boudu Sauvage des Baux, The Cameraman, Charulata, The Exterminating Angel, I Fidanziati, Ikiru, The Magnificent Ambersons, Les Quatre Cents Coups, Sawdust and Tinsel, Singin' in the Rain.

Philip Coorey

CEYLON

The Apu Trilogy, Citizen Kane, If... The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Memories of Underdevelopment (*Tomas Alea*), Monsieur Verdoux, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Point Blank, Psycho, The Seven Samurai.

I should point out the very few opportunities we get here of seeing the films that we read about...

Richard Corliss

United States FILM COMMENT

Sunrise, La Règle du Jeu, His Girl Friday, The Lady Eve, Citizen Kane, Casablanca, Les Enfants du Paradis, Letter from an Unknown Woman, The Searchers, The Seventh Seal, Psycho, Chinese Fire Drill (*Will Hindle*).

I have cheated outrageously... a dozen cinematic saviours of which I am one grateful disciple.

I rather resist letting these films be identified by the director's name alone. Perhaps half of them are distinguished as much by the writing...

Jaime E. Costa

Uruguay CINE UNIVERSITARIO

Citizen Kane, La Dolce Vita, Hamlet (*Olivier*), Les Quatre Cents Coups, Singin' in the Rain, An American in Paris, A Star is Born (*Cukor*), Some Like It Hot, North by Northwest, My Darling Clementine.

Peter Cowie

Great Britain INTERNATIONAL FILM GUIDE

The Seventh Seal, Les Enfants du Paradis, L'Avventura, Duck Soup, Senso, Le Feu Follet, Jules et Jim, Hiroshima mon Amour, Les Parapluies de Cherbourg, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon.

This choice consists unashamedly of films I like more each time I see them, films that are all incurably romantic.

Edgardo Cozarinsky

Argentina

True Heart Susie, Sunrise, Trouble in Paradise, La Règle du Jeu, My Darling Clementine, The Fountainhead (*Vidor*), Vertigo, Persona, Deux ou trois Choses que je sais d'elle, Fritz Lang's complete works as one multi-episodic film.

October 11, 1971, 4 p.m. ... two days later or one hour earlier my choice could have been other.

Judith Crist

United States NEW YORK MAGAZINE

City Lights, La Règle du Jeu, Citizen Kane, La Grande Illusion, 8½, La Guerre est Finie, Ikiru, Winter Light, War and Peace (*Bondarchuk*), The Maltese Falcon.

Adina Darian

Romania CINEMA

The Cameraman, Ivan the Terrible, Citizen Kane, Bicycle Thieves, Hamlet (*Olivier*), Salvatore Giuliano, Blow-Up, If... Romeo and Juliet (*Zeffirelli*), Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

Jan Dawson

Great Britain MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

The Birds Come to Die in Peru (*Romain Gary*), La Femme Infidèle, Hellzapoppin, Le Mépris, Mouchette, Muriel, Nicht Versöhnt, Our Hospitality, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Paths of Glory.

An alphabetical list that got as far as 'P'... very unfair to 'The Red Desert', 'La Règle du Jeu', 'The Spider's Strategy', 'Tirez sur le Pianiste', 'Walkabout' and 'Weekend'.

Mauritz Edström

Sweden DAGENS NYHETER

Los Olvidados, Nazarin, The Exterminating Angel, The General, Day of Wrath, Mouchette, La Jetée (*Marker*), Teorema, The Iron Horse, La Hora de los Hornos (*Solanas*).

This is just a contemporary choice. I have classics too! The whole list could have been Buñuel, the most classic and most contemporary of them all.

'La Jetée'



Lotte Eisner

France

Earth, Greed, Ivan the Terrible (*Part Two, colour sequences*), The Idiot (*Kurosawa*), M (*Lang*), Monsieur Verdoux, The Passion of Joan of Arc, La Règle du Jeu, Senso, Sunrise.

Allen Eyles

Great Britain FOCUS ON FILM

Late Autumn (*Ozu*), She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Intolerance, The Magnificent Ambersons, A Night at the Opera, Le Amiche, Palm Beach Story (*Sturges*), Summer Holiday (*Mamoulian*), Duel in the Sun, Ride the High Country (*Peckinpah*).

This is today's list, not yesterday's, not tomorrow's...

Stephen Farber

United States

Citizen Kane, 8½, Jules et Jim, Lawrence of Arabia (*the uncut version*), The Manchurian Candidate, Masculin Féminin, The Night of the Hunter, Performance, Persona, La Règle du Jeu.

Jean-Paul Fargier, Gerard LeBlanc

France CINETHIQUE

British Sounds, Chapayev, The East is Red (*Anon; China*), Enthusiasm (*Vertov*), Forward, Soviet (*Vertov*), Lotte in Italia (*Godard*), Pravda (*Godard*), Red Detachment of Women (*Anon; China*), The Sixth Part of the World (*Vertov*), Un Film comme les Autres (*Godard*).

Voici notre liste des dix meilleurs films de ce que les critiques de cinéma appellent 'l'histoire du cinéma'.

Goffredo Fofi

Italy OMBRE ROSSI

Citizen Kane, La Règle du Jeu, October, Modern Times, M (*Lang*), Viridiana, Paisa, Day of Wrath, The Servant, La Hora de los Hornos (*Solanas*).

Philip French

Great Britain

Battleship Potemkin, The General, The Lady Vanishes, La Règle du Jeu, Stagecoach, Citizen Kane, Singin' in the Rain, Ikiru, Salvatore Giuliano, Winter Light.

Strictly a Desert Island selection, though I wouldn't be happy about a Ten Best list that didn't include a thriller, a silent comedy, a Western and a musical. Only four of my ten favourite directors are represented.

John Gillett

Great Britain

L'Avventura, Early Autumn (*Ozu*), Happiness (*Medvedkin*), Ivan the Terrible, Nazarin, Olympic Games 1936 (*Riefenstahl*), La Règle du Jeu, Sansho Dayu, The Searchers, Seven Chances.

... and it breaks my heart to exclude Stroheim, Ophüls and Dreyer.

Penelope Gilliatt

Great Britain THE NEW YORKER

The Navigator, La Règle du Jeu, 8½, Persona, Ikiru, Citizen Kane, The Apu Trilogy, Battleship Potemkin, Jules et Jim, Weekend.

... and I can't find the room I should for 'Zéro de Conduite'.

Verina Glaessner

Great Britain TIME OUT

The Man with a Movie Camera, Happiness (*Medvedkin*), King Kong, The Shame, Wave-length (*Mike Snow*), The Boy (*Oshima*), Chelsea Girls, Nosferatu, Le Boucher, Sex and the Single Girl (*Quine*).

Giovanni Grazzini

Italy CORRIERE DELLA SERA

Battleship Potemkin, The Circus, La Grande

Illusion, Bicycle Thieves, 8½, Antonio das Mortes, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Silence and Cry (*Jancsó*), Mouchette, Andrei Roublev.

Nina Hibbin

Great Britain MORNING STAR

Ikiru, Tristana, Death in Venice, Man of Aran, La Règle du Jeu, Battleship Potemkin, The Great Dictator, Il Posto, Kes, The End of St. Petersburg.

Margaret Hinxman

Great Britain SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

All Quiet on the Western Front, Citizen Kane, Gone with the Wind, Letter from an Unknown Woman, Accident, Tristana, The Grapes of Wrath, Wild Strawberries, Sunset Boulevard, La Grande Illusion.

Penelope Houston

Great Britain SIGHT AND SOUND

Au Hasard, Balthazar, Charulata, Citizen Kane, The Eclipse, The General, Miracle of Morgan's Creek (*Sturges*), Muriel, La Règle du Jeu, Silence and Cry (*Jancsó*), 2001: A Space Odyssey.



'Miracle of Morgan's Creek'

Gilles Jacob

France

The Exterminating Angel, L'Avventura, Singin' in the Rain, The Navigator, Lady from Shanghai, Foolish Wives, Lumière d'Été (*Grémillon*), La Règle du Jeu, Duck Soup, Smiles of a Summer Night.

Stanley Kauffmann

United States NEW REPUBLIC

The Gold Rush, Battleship Potemkin, The General, The Passion of Joan of Arc, La Grande Illusion, Citizen Kane, Rashomon, Tokyo Story, L'Avventura, Persona.

Arthur Knight

United States SATURDAY REVIEW

A Nous la Liberté, Bicycle Thieves, Citizen Kane, City Lights, Ikiru, La Notte, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Persona, Punishment Park (*Peter Watkins*), Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Onat Kutlar

Turkey FILM

Battleship Potemkin, Mother, The Gold Rush, Battle of Algiers, Ugetsu Monogatari, Los Olvidados, Antonio das Mortes, Death in Venice, Hiroshima mon Amour, Hamlet (*Kozintsev*).

John Francis Lane

Great Britain/Italy

Intolerance, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Battleship Potemkin, Modern Times, Citizen Kane, Rome, Open City, I Vitelloni, Wild Strawberries, L'Avventura, A Bout de Souffle.

Obviously these are not my ten favourite films of all time: they are those that, according to my vision of the cinema, represent the ten most influential films in the history of the cinema.

Jay Leyda

United States

L'Age d'Or, Rashomon, The World of Apu, 8½, Storm (*Chin Shan*), The Shame, The Money Order (*Sembene*), Andrei Roublev, The Conformist, Day by Day (*Ioseliani*).

I've stuck to the absurd Ten, but made them all post-1930. Otherwise, madness.

Anthony Macklin

United States FILM HERITAGE

Birth of a Nation, Bonnie and Clyde, Citizen Kane, 8½, Les Jeux Interdits, The General, The Gold Rush, L'Avventura, Battleship Potemkin, The Seventh Seal.

Derek Malcolm

Great Britain THE GUARDIAN

Earth, Sons of the Desert (*Laurel and Hardy*), La Règle du Jeu, Fantasia, The Magnificent Ambersons, Day of Wrath, Ugetsu Monogatari, Wild Strawberries, An Autumn Afternoon, Vivre sa Vie.

Not the greatest, but those I could least bear never to see again—at the moment. All change next week.

Amita Malik

India THE STATESMAN

The Apu Trilogy, The Battle of Algiers, Citizen Kane, Closely Observed Trains, The Gold Rush, La Grande Illusion, Hiroshima mon Amour, Nazarin, Rashomon, Wild Strawberries.

Roger Manvell

Great Britain

La Notte, Persona, The Gold Rush, Battleship Potemkin, 8½, The General, Hamlet (*Kozintsev*), Mother, Aparajito, Hiroshima mon Amour.

Marcel Martin

France CINEMA '71

Alexander Nevsky, La Règle du Jeu, Senso, Ugetsu Monogatari, Hiroshima mon Amour, L'Avventura, Lola Montès, Pierrot le Fou, Mouchette, A Passion.

Paul Mayersberg

Great Britain

L'Age d'Or, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, Chappaqua (*Conrad Rooks*), Citizen Kane, Mouchette, Orphée, Persona, Rome, Open City, Strike, Vertigo.

Boleslaw Michalek

Poland

Nanook of the North, Strike, The Gold Rush, Citizen Kane, Ossessione, Rashomon, Les Vacances de M. Hulot, Viridiana, Wild Strawberries, 8½.

Tom Milne

Great Britain

French Can-Can, Les Yeux sans Visage, The Night of the Hunter, The Sun Shines Bright, Love Me Tonight, Au Hasard, Balthazar, Our Hospitality, El, The Magnificent Ambersons, L'Amour Fou (*Rivette*).

Ib Monty

Denmark

20th Century (*Hawks*), Une Partie de Campagne, The Magnificent Ambersons, Listen to Britain, On the Town, Wagonmaster, Tokyo Story, Ugetsu Monogatari, The Seven Samurai, Playtime.

Morando Morandini

Italy

Wild Strawberries, Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé, Nazarin, Day of Wrath, Ivan the Terrible, Ugetsu Monogatari, La Grande Illusion, La Guerre est Finie, Païsa, Senso.

I've played the game with sound films . . . It's a pity for my beloved Keaton, Chaplin, Murnau, Stroheim . . .



'Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol'

Gene Moskowitz

United States VARIETY

Young Mr. Lincoln, The Life of O-Haru (*Mizoguchi*), Limelight, A Generation, Earth, La Règle du Jeu, Ivan the Terrible, No Greater Glory (*Borzage*), Andrei Roublev, Tristana.

Rui Nogueira

France

America, America, Os Deuses e os Mortes (*Guerra*), The Devil is a Woman, Gertrud, Her Man (*Tay Garnett*), Only Angels Have Wings, Queen Kelly, A Star is Born (*Cukor*), Sunrise, They Died With Their Boots On (*Walsh*).

Enno Patalas

West Germany FILMKRITIK

Intolerance (*toned and tinted version*), Austernprinzessin (*Lubitsch*), Phantom (*Murnau*), The Saga of Anatahan, Gertrud, Pierrot le Fou, Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol (*Rocha*), Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, Neurasia (*Werner Schroeter*), Vent d'Est.

Not 'best' ten, but the ones which impressed/shocked/interested/moved my thoughts and feelings most . . . during the ten years since the last poll.

Morten Pii

Denmark KOSMORAMA

La Baie des Anges, The Bandwagon, Le Boucher, Listen to Britain, Lola, Peeping Tom, Sherlock Jr., Tirez sur le Pianiste, Touch of Evil, Les Vacances de M. Hulot.

A strictly emotional list with no regard for historical significance . . .

Dilys Powell

Great Britain SUNDAY TIMES

Ashes and Diamonds, Belle de Jour, Citizen Kane, The General, The Lady with the Little Dog, The Last Day of Summer (*Konwicki/Laskowski*), Lonely Are the Brave (*David Miller*), Il Mare, Le Million, Rear Window.

'Death in Venice' is too recent, and anyway I feel like giving some of the great current names—Visconti, Antonioni, Fellini, Resnais, Renoir—a rest. Resisting the temptation to list ten of the short Laurel and Hardy funnies . . .

'Twentieth Century'



Bjørn Rasmussen

Denmark

Viridiana, Battleship Potemkin, Citizen Kane, On the Town, The Gold Rush, Vampyr, The Cameraman, Ugetsu Monogatari, Duck Soup, The Seven Samurai.

Plus, plus, plus... from now on, 'S and S' must stand for 'Sadists of Sinema'...

David Robinson

Great Britain FINANCIAL TIMES

The Wedding March, L'Age d'Or, Our Hospitality, L'Enfant Sauvage, Le Mélomane (Méliès), Tokyo Story, City Lights, La Règle du Jeu, Belle de Jour, Stagecoach.

Richard Roud

United States/Great Britain

La Règle du Jeu, L'Atalante, Citizen Kane, Tokyo Story, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Deux ou Trois Choses que je sais d'elle, Not Reconciled, The Spider's Strategy, The Go-Between, Muriel.

Andrew Sarris

United States VILLAGE VOICE

Madame De... , Lola Montès, Ugetsu Monogatari, La Règle du Jeu, Vertigo, The Searchers, Sherlock Jr., Francesco Giullare di Dio (Rossellini), Magnificent Ambersons, Belle de Jour.

Tadao Sato

Japan

Battleship Potemkin, Brief Encounter, Paisa, Tokyo Story, Pather Panchali, Wild Strawberries, Ashes and Diamonds, L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, West Side Story, Nippon Konchuyuki (Shohei Imamura).

Hans Schiller

Sweden SVENSKA DAGBLADET

Sunrise, Zéro de Conduite, La Règle du Jeu, Ugetsu Monogatari, Bande à Part, Gertrud, Marnie, Blow-Up, Mouchette, Rendez-vous à Bray (Delvaux).

Siegfried Schober

West Germany SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

Citizen Kane, The Birds, Viaggio in Italia, Antonio das Mortes, Partner (Bertolucci), Pierrot le Fou, La Règle du Jeu, Chelsea Girls, L'Amour Fou (Rivette), To Have and Have Not.

Paul Schrader

United States CINEMA

An Autumn Afternoon, Journal d'une Curé de Campagne, My Darling Clementine, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Masculin Féminin, La Règle du Jeu, Viaggio in Italia, Kiss Me Deadly (Aldrich), Lolita, Performance.

'Sansho Dayu'

Your ten film limit stipulation... threatens to reduce the critic to a familiar litany of 'Introduction to the Art of the Cinema' greats. Therefore I have let Jennings ('Fires Were Started'), Welles ('Touch of Evil') and Murnau ('Nosferatu') suffer at the hands of Aldrich, Kubrick and Cammell/Roeg; but what of 'Comanche Station', 'Naked Spur' and 'Gun Crazy'?

Josef Sryck

Israel HAARETZ

Umberto D., The Czech Year (Trnka), Ikiru, Eva (Losey), The Invention of Evil (Karel Zeman), Five Easy Pieces (Rafelson), Wild Strawberries, 8½, Closely Observed Trains, To Be Or Not To Be (Lubitsch).

'Bicycle Thieves' and 'Citizen Kane' are the kind of films I ought to see again... Here are the films I like to see again, today and at this moment.

Elliott Stein

United States

The Bat Whispers (Roland West), The Bride of Frankenstein (Whale), The Dance of Life (John Cromwell), Das Stahlter (Willy Ziehlke), Gertrud, King Kong, The Magnificent Ambersons, Peter Pan (Brenon), Scorpio Rising (Anger), An Actor's Revenge.

Philip Strick

Great Britain

L'Avventura, Marnie, Meet Me in St. Louis, Persona, Rashomon, The Searchers, Teorema, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Viridiana, Weekend.

John Russell Taylor

Great Britain THE TIMES

Le! Journal d'un Curé de Campagne, Funny Face, 8½, The General, Triumph of the Will, The Old Dark House (Whale), La Voie Lactée, Psycho, Kind Hearts and Coronets, Teorema. Tomorrow I might change half the list, but there would still be one Keaton, one Bresson, one Fellini, one Buñuel, one Hitchcock, one musical, one horror film... I think!

Christian Braad Thomsen

Denmark

A Bout de Souffle, Pierrot le Fou, Weekend, Antonio das Mortes, Der Leone Have Sept Cabecas (Rocha), Os Deuses e os Mortes (Guerra), Lola, Tirez sur le Pianiste, La Peau Douce, Au Hasard, Balthazar.

Véra Volmane

France

Wild Strawberries, 8½, Fellini-Satyricon, Ivan the Terrible, Viridiana, L'Avventura, Hiroshima mon Amour, Andrei Roublev, Johnny Got His Gun (Dalton Trumbo), The Go-Between.

J'ai pensé à des films relativement récents...



'The Bat Whispers'

Alexander Walker

Great Britain EVENING STANDARD

Dr. Strangelove, Citizen Kane, La Règle du Jeu, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Gold Rush, Blow-Up, The Wind (Sjöström), L'Année Dernière à Marienbad, L'Avventura, 42nd Street.

Mike Wallington

Great Britain CINEMA

Shin Heike Monogatari (Mizoguchi), La Signora di Tutti (Ophüls), Arsenal, The Saga of Anatahan, Francesco Giullare di Dio (Rossellini), His Butler's Sister (Borzage), Written on the Wind (Sirk), Vertigo, Magick Lantern Cycle (Anger), Vampyr.

Plus... Vigo, Murnau, Keaton, Welles, Vidor, Beavers and Kubelka.

David Wilson

Great Britain SIGHT AND SOUND

The Burmese Harp, Citizen Kane, Letter from an Unknown Woman, Love Me Tonight, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, The Navigator, Paths of Glory, Persona, La Règle du Jeu, The Scarlet Empress.

No Eisenstein, no Pudovkin, no Vertov; no Murnau, no Lang, no Cocteau; no Antonioni, no Resnais; no Wajda, no Ray. They're on tomorrow's list, as would be 'The Ladykillers' and Laurel and Hardy.

John Weisman

United States ROLLING STONE

A Night at the Opera, A Walk in the Sun (Milestone), Berlin: Rhythm of a City (Ruttman), The Hustler, Point Blank, Red River, The Servant, The Seventh Seal, The Wild Bunch.

Films I'd most like to see again... and again... and again.

Robin Wood

Great Britain

Sansho Dayu, Letter from an Unknown Woman, A Passion, La Règle du Jeu, Rio Bravo, Sunrise, Vertigo, Bigger than Life (Nicholas Ray), Days and Nights in the Forest (Satyajit Ray), Viaggio in Italia.

Francis Wyndham

Great Britain SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE

Alice Adams (Stevens), Battle of Algiers, Citizen Kane, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, Le Deuxième Souffle (Melville), The Eclipse, Flesh (Paul Morrissey), Imitation of Life (Sirk), Meet Me in St. Louis, A Star is Born (Cukor).

Paul D. Zimmerman

United States NEWSWEEK

A Nous la Liberté, Les Enfants du Paradis, Intolerance, Kind Hearts and Coronets, Modern Times, Zéro de Conduite, Olympic Games 1936, The Seven Samurai, The Lady Vanishes, La Grande Illusion.



IN THE PICTURE



Bette

In the flesh, she is a surprisingly small woman. Neat bones, fastidiously formed features, figure well contained. Nothing glaring. The famous scathing mouth turns out to be standard size and far from deadly. But the atmosphere at Pinewood on the set of Bette Davis' latest film, *Madame Sin*, is electric. You know you are in the presence. Not that she expects or invites attention. She simply commands the court through a formidable sense of being. (It is no accident that one remembers her Elizabeth the First and Catherine the Great before other, better performances.)

Time and hindsight have bequeathed her a celebrity beyond that of great actress and superstar. There is no one left who represents so accurately what Hollywood was all about. Even her rebellions, her suspensions, her legal battle with Jack Warner against the slavery of the contract system, were characteristic. For Hollywood was shaped by rebels who created a governing Establishment out of a revolutionary cabal.

Remembering her past protests, she is perhaps slightly astonished at the fiercely protective affection she feels for those forty tough, humiliating, exhilarating years of 'the career'. She talks about 'the career' as if it were some separate astral body orbiting around the earthbound being of Bette Davis and not totally under control.

'Films were always a great art. We who worked in them during the Thirties—the so-called golden age of Hollywood—knew that. But the critics didn't. They didn't take them seriously. You know why? Because you could go into the movie house at any time, right in the middle of the film. Not like the theatre where you had to be there on time for the performance. Worst thing that

happened to the cinema. Continuous performances. Should never have been allowed. But that's what helped create the cinema habit, they say.' The tone of the voice says as much as the dialogue. Seconds after the word 'theatre' has died in the ear, you can still feel the sting of venom in its tail: left over, no doubt, from the time when the critics saved their reverence for the stage and their ridicule for the screen.

She puffs hard on a cigarette, familiarly. Her costume for *Madame Sin*—black wig, green eye-makeup, black trouser suit loaded with jewelled medallions—would intimidate most women. But she knows exactly how to dominate the cloth and paint and rhinestones—it's part of her expertise.

'This film is a new experience for me. For one thing, it's a crime fantasy and usually I like to find some way of relating to my characters. But how can you relate to someone as outrageous as Madame Sin? So I have to invent all the time. It's fun. They make films in a completely different way, these days. So I just let this young director David Greene lead me around by the nose. He's brilliant. But different, as I say. Here we go out on location for authenticity. In my time we created exteriors so perfectly in the studio, like the set for *The Petrified Forest* for instance, that you couldn't even tell the difference. And we were able to get on with the job instead of waiting around for the weather. But that's the way they do it now. I'm learning. But I can't say I feel comfortable. It'll never be the same again. Those days are gone, but gone. They'll never come back...'

She has a real respect for her producer and co-actor Robert Wagner. 'That young man is a great administrator. Producing is something an actor can do. But these actors who turn directors!

It's madness. I've made eighty films and I can't begin to know how you should go about directing a film... Like most veterans of the Hollywood system, she instinctively distrusts a lack of organisation, a sloppy approach to the job. Arduous work is one thing, wasted work is unforgiveable. Though guarded in her comments on the new cinema styles, she obviously finds the hit-and-miss unprepared quality of some new films hardest to take.

'The first indication I had that they wanted a clip from *Now Voyager* for *Summer of '42* came from the studio, who implied that it would be used for a laugh. My lawyer wrote back saying if they wanted a clip to laugh at why didn't they choose a scene from one of their current films. How about that...? Actually, I gather it was used very tastefully and made an important point in the story. I've a great admiration for Robert Mulligan anyway. You know, I had to fight to get *Now Voyager*. Miss Irene Dunne was going to do it. And I stormed into Hal Wallis' office—he found all my best subjects, a genius! I told him how dare he cast Miss Dunne, when I was under contract? It was my world. I knew all about that woman and her possessive New England mother.

'I was lucky. A lot of my films were produced by a man named Henry Blanke, who had tremendous taste. Things have gone too far these days on the screen, what should be honest becomes vulgar. But we used to get so mad all the time having to compromise. You remember *Winter Meeting*, about the love affair between a woman and a man who was study-

ing for the priesthood. Well, this was a ferocious story. She hated his Church and his faith. She couldn't understand why he was shutting himself away from her. And it was tough. You could do it now, properly. But then they had to water it down so much it was just a mild romance with bits of Catholicism around the fringes.

'And then the classic case was *The Letter*. The Code said I had to die because I was a murderess. William Wyler got around that as well as he possibly could, but it missed the point of the story which came out in that last line of hers—"The tragedy is I still love the man I killed".

Somehow the totally forgettable *Fashions of 1934* comes up. Does a copy even exist? 'Wasn't that ghastly? That was my Garbo period. They gave me this long blonde wig because they wanted us all to look like imitations of Garbo. But I didn't let them get away with that for long. I used to go into the commissary at Warners and look at the pictures round the walls and I swear to you that every young girl there looked exactly the same. They always started out wanting to fix your teeth, that was the first thing, and then to change your hair style and colouring. Margaret Sullivan, Katharine Hepburn and I were the hold-outs. We were the ones who dug our heels in and wouldn't be changed. I really felt sorry for those Hollywood people. They couldn't figure us out at all...'

She remembers, when she was first making her name on the stage, putting a New York milliner in his place when he had offered to send her a selection of hats because 'a hat is very special, it

Bette Davis as Madame Sin. Denholm Elliott in background





Hitchcock at work on 'Frenzy', his first British-made film since 'Stagefright'. With Anna Massie, Jon Finch

makes you feel a different person.' The upstart Bette replied, 'But I don't want to be different, I like the person I am.'

'All the same, hats are nice for an occasion,' she muses and, as in *All About Eve*, the sudden flashes of femininity, the lowering of the defences, make her seem very vulnerable, rather touching. 'The designers we had at Warners were so good. Orry-Kelly, Edith Head. They designed clothes for the people we were. Not like Adrian at Metro who designed fancy dress.'

'Metro was a fairy-tale studio compared to Warners. They made their people feel important, cherished. Great big dressing-rooms. All that stuff. I wouldn't have liked that. Nobody made us feel important at Warners. You just worked damned hard. Six or seven B pictures a year I made in the early Thirties. That's where I learned my trade, that's where we all learned our trade.'

'But it's a ruthless life and you had to fight all the time for quality. And sometimes it got so tiring. You'd go to the studio and think: why am I battling like this? Why don't I just give in? Will it really matter to the audience if that piece of dialogue isn't perfect, if that dress isn't quite right for the character? But now I see my films on television and I'm so glad I did stick out. Because the quality still shows.'

'*Jezebel*, that's where the career really began to take shape. Hal found *Jezebel* for me. I remember David Selznick wanted to sue us because we came out with it just before *Gone With the Wind*. But in a way I think it was truer to the feeling of the South at that time than his film. I've always felt *Gone With the Wind* would have been twice as good if it had been in black and white, more intimate, smaller. It's a pity these days that you have to film in colour, you can't make what is essentially a

black and white subject in black and white. *Baby Jane* would have been much too pretty in colour. On the other hand, *Elizabeth and Essex* and *Mr. Skeffington* would have been marvellous in colour. But in the Thirties, the studio was only allocated two colour films a year, because it was so expensive and there was only one process, Technicolor. Those of us who made money at the box office never got colour films because we didn't need that extra attraction. They gave the colour to the terrible scripts, as an added inducement to get the public in.'

About her colleagues, she talks sometimes sternly but always with understanding. One senses that Paul Muni on *Juarez* must have been a penance to work with, but she calls him 'Mr.' and prefers to remember the time when he didn't have to have an acre of make-up to portray a convincing character. 'He was so spontaneous, so good, in *Bordertown*, *Scarface*. In *Juarez* he wore this complete rubber mask which made him look exactly like the portraits and statues of Juarez in Mexico. The exhibitors weren't happy at all; they said "What's the point of having Muni if you can't recognise him?" Anyway, he had his part built up, too. Originally Juarez was a fringe character; the story was about the Emperor Maximilian, Brian Aherne, and his wife Carlotta, me. By the time they'd cut out some of our crucial scenes, the audience couldn't understand why Carlotta was going mad at the end, anyway. It didn't make sense.'

'People criticise Hollywood now. But we made some good films. Crusading films too—think about *Black Legion*, *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, the anti-Nazi films. One of the saddest days of my life was when I went to a farewell party they gave on the stages at Warners. There was a still from every film that had ever been produced there on the walls,

and all the old-timers who were still alive turned up, supporting players like Frank McHugh, who often made the films. Those people had size... I came home and I could have wept, because I knew we'd never see the like of that party and that Hollywood again.'

The assistant director on *Madame Sin* pokes his head around the door of her dressing room and apologises for calling her so early, as it happened unnecessarily. 'Don't apologise,' she tells him. 'It's your job to anticipate the director's needs. It was the same with Wyler; if he needed a prop or an actor and you couldn't produce them, you'd have had to take the can back. You're only doing your job.' And from Bette Davis, there is no greater compliment.

MARGARET HINXMAN

Bonaparte et la Révolution

Abel Gance's new version of his 1926 *Napoléon* had its première in Paris on September 9, 1971. Initiated by André Malraux to form part of the bicentennial celebrations in 1969, progress was hampered by lack of money. Eventually, Claude Lelouch took the project over and released it through Les Films Treize.

To set matters straight, *Bonaparte et la Révolution* is not a definitive reconstruction of *Napoléon*. In its 4 hours 35 minutes, it contains the major episodes of the original—La Marseillaise, Corsica, Toulon, La Terreur, Vendémiaire, Le Bal des Victimes, Italie—but there is a great deal of extra material. 'My original film was not entirely historically correct,' says Gance. 'It contained melodrama. This version is absolutely authentic.' Gance's new researches are given pride of place; the film makes extensive use of documents, prints,

pamphlets and posters. Live action is occasionally combined with engravings through Gance's *Pictographe*. Stills and frozen frames are frequently used as cutaways.

The scenes photographed for the 1936 sound version of *Napoléon* are used freely; certain episodes of the original film have been jettisoned to provide room for the new shooting. The sequences of Napoleon's youth at Brienne have gone, although the snowball fight appears in a montage at the end. The majority of the episodes with Tristan Fleuri and Violine have been dispensed with, together with the subplot of Pozzo di Borgo and Salicetti. Nevertheless, all these characters appear in other sequences. The most significant loss, however, is the Triptyques—the 3-screen innovation which Gance hoped to transfer optically to 70 mm. 'No Brienne, no Triptyques,' says Gance. 'The film is naked! But Lelouch said it was powerful enough as it was on 35 mm.'

Although it is running at the Kinopanorama, at La Motte Picquet-Grenelle, where the Russian *War and Peace* was shown, the presentation is in the old Academy ratio. If future theatres insist on wide-screen, the cut-off will be severe. The large silent frame has already been cropped to accommodate the soundtrack, and this has meant a loss of height as well.



Napoleon at 81: Albert Dieudonné.

In a sequence at the beginning, Gance appears in colour to read a speech; the film returns to black and white at the end of the reel, and there is no attempt at tinting. But the quality of the original silent material is extremely good. The inserts from the 1936 version and the extra shooting of 1970 will be quite apparent to those who have seen the silent film. Nevertheless, Gance has included some sequences shot in 1926 that have not been seen since the 1927 première; among them is a version of the Bal des Victimes in which Napoleon reacts explosively to nudity and licentiousness among the dancers. The score for the 1927 première at the Opera was arranged by Honegger and included several original pieces. The 1936 version was scored by Henri Verdun, and much of his music has been retained for the new film, together with modern recordings of Beethoven and Mozart.

Disregarding the aesthetic argument of whether a silent film should be made to talk or not, I must admit that the post-synchronisation is frequently flawless. The impression is assisted, of course, by the number of speeches recorded with direct sound. But when lines are fitted to the silent sequences—and most of the time they fit exactly—the effect is quite supernatural. Evidently, when anyone spoke during the original shooting, they spoke lines—well-written, well-thought out lines. This was not common practice in the silent days; despite the number of lip-readers in the audience, actors would generally improvise. Not in *Napoléon*. Gance clearly conceived the film with all its elements present, and even in its silent form, sound played an important part: Napoleon entering the empty Convention and turning, startled, when the heavy doors slam behind him... Robespierre ordering his musician to play louder when Danton passes his window on the way to the guillotine... the spectacular introduction of the 'Marseillaise' at the Club des Cordeliers.

Gance and Albert Dieudonné, who played Napoleon, are both the same age—82 this year—yet both have dubbed their own voices. Gance goes as far as to appear in front of the camera once again, as St. Just, although in heavy silhouette. Dieudonné's voice sounds much the same as it did when he recorded it for the 1936 version.

Napoléon has always been a film unique in cinema history. The 1926 version anticipated Cinerama. The 1936 version anticipated stereophonic sound. This new version may set a new style—for directors to return to their early work and, by re-editing and re-shooting, produce a new film. It may render purists like me apologetic, but it might help solve the crisis in the cinema...

KEVIN BROWNLOW

Among the Missing

It is hard to say whether the number of unreleased films has increased with the creeping pauperisation of the cinema is going through, or remains the same because fast changing tastes can turn yesterday's turkey into tomorrow's sleeper. But the list of movies which studios and producers are not showing to any paying public is both an icy reminder of Charles Reade's aphorism that art is not imitation but illusion, and a piece of esoterica for the ultimate film freak.

This was indeed the year that was—the end of the three-year long night during which the American majors lost half a billion dollars (\$525,000,000 to be exact, although the final figure is expected to reach \$600 million). Almost half this amount falls into a category called 'inventory writedown', an auditors' expression meaning that failures were written off for what they were—losses. The majors, and that is everybody except AIP and



'England Made Me': Michael York in Peter Duffell's film of the Graham Greene novel.

Disney, reported \$250 million in writedowns, before taxes. They never list the losses by title (which could have been edifying), nor do they say at which point things went wrong, so that we don't know which project was 'written down' at its screenplay stage, during production or after completion. Some movies which are completed open for a few days and languish at the box-office or are laughed off the screen. In other instances, a direct sale to television is advisable, although the networks are beginning to read reviews and are turning down obvious losers.

Understandably, facts are hard to come by in this netherworld of instant write-offs, where the glare of publicity never shines. It is also a world where the difference between a one-week run on the lower half of a double bill and no release at all is a paper thing. The sudden success last summer of *Blue Water, White Death* and *The Hellstrom Chronicle* made National General take *The African Elephant* off the missing list and put it into circulation. Meanwhile, three new directors' first films have joined the list.

In 1970, screenwriter Charles Eastman (*Little Fauss and Big Halsy*) shot *The All-American Boy*, in which Jon Voight plays the title role of an amateur boxer. Also in 1970, newcomers Jim Frawley, a former actor, and 26-year-old Australian Quintin Martins shot California movies, for Cinema Center and M-G-M respectively. Frawley made *The Christian Licorice Store* (with Beau Bridges, Maud Adams, Gilbert Roland, and a cameo appearance by Jean Renoir) in Hollywood; while Martins shot *Thumb Tripping* (with Bruce Dern and Michael Burns) up and down the coast. The non-release of Frawley's first feature hasn't hurt him, since he has recently been filming *Dime Box* for Fox. Normally the forgiveness doesn't come that fast.

Newcomers, however, are by no means the only directors with instant defeats. John Frankenheimer's *The Extraordinary Seaman* (David Niven, Faye Dunaway) was edited down to a desperate 70 minutes and withdrawn after a few bookings; Sidney Lumet's *The Appointment* (Omar Sharif, Anouk Aimée) was shown in San Francisco and immediately pulled out of circulation. And United Artists, for example, is sitting on a long list of overseas productions, from Skolimowski's *Adventures of Gerard* to John Boorman's *Leo the Last*. The towering cost of distribution is the main reason for majors deciding against even trying to put some films into release, even if they are their own productions.

When a distributor actually makes expensive efforts to save a shaky entry, as Warners did with Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, it makes news. Only marginal newcomers, such as Don Rugoff's aggressive Cinema V or Jerry Gross' Cinemation, seem ready to throw big campaigns behind movies that others might abandon as instant defeats. Rugoff undertook an unprecedented campaign to make *Long Ago, Tomorrow* (Bryan Forbes' retitled *The Raging Moon*) into a success, spending as much on publicity—including \$45,000 to Burt Bacharach for a song which caused the title change—as he did on the film's North American rights. Rugoff has done it before, backing favourable word of mouth publicity with powerful advertising campaigns. Sometimes it works for him (*Z*); sometimes it doesn't (*The Fireman's Ball*).

Along film row, however, the feeling is that the market is too soft today for such blitzkrieg campaigns, that not every doubtful item could be saved all the time with massive publicity, and that if anything the list of unreleased pictures will remain as long as ever.

AXEL MADSEN

Pesaro 1971

For the first few days at Pesaro, art was dead, style was suspect, and the new austerity was greeted with massive walk-outs and sleep-ins. 'We're here to talk politics, not cinema,' proclaimed more than one of the decimated audience left to confer with the film-makers after each screening. Marguerite Duras was accused of betraying her political aims by revealing her fascination with cinematic form in *Jaune le Soleil*; a mysterious charge as it was arguably the most unwatchable film on show.

Pesaro, established since 1964 as a major revolutionary workshop, was right to direct attention to the new concentration on films as tools. The dominant theme, declared an introduction, was no longer 'What is cinema and how is it made?' but 'Why and for whom is cinema made?' It went on, 'If the Sixties were the decade of new cinema, the Seventies will be, or will perhaps try to be, the decade of political cinema.' But what was on the screen often looked more like amateur telly than new militancy. Moreover the new film-makers were unlucky enough to be screened alongside an admirable Oshima retrospective, which constantly demonstrated that if art had succumbed the corpse was in magnificent condition.

The disappointing posturing of most of the European films gave way to real urgency and passion only at the end of the festival with the Latin American contributions. Two were outstanding. *The Night of San Juan* is by Jorge Sanjinés, the Bolivian director of *Condor Blood*, which attracted enthusiasm at last year's festivals. His new film uses survivors and witnesses of the 1967 massacre of miners by the army to reconstruct the event, and their participation turns the film into a unique collective work. As an experience it is overwhelming; and

it suggests inexhaustible possibilities for developments in group work.

The Road Towards Death of Old Man Reales, a first film by Argentinian director Gerardo Vallejo, subsequently took the major prize at Mannheim. The story of Reales' three sons, one an itinerant sugar cane worker, one a policeman and one a trade unionist, indicates the choices confronting the Argentinian people. Such a summary must suggest a crude allegory. In fact the film is subtle, fierce and compelling. Vallejo was assistant director on *La Hora de los Hornos*, and his film reveals him to be no less of an artist than Solanas.

London has still had little hint of the extraordinary work coming out of Latin America. In Italy RAI, the state television company, is following its backing of films by Fellini, Bertolucci, Rossellini and Olmi with a whole series of features by young Latin American directors. *The Night of San Juan* is a RAI co-production, and future films will include features by the exiled Glauber Rocha, Joaquim Pedro Andrade, also from Brazil, Fernando Solanas from Argentina, Santiago Alvarez from Cuba, and Alexandro Jodorowsky from Chile.

Although two-thirds of the Western European productions at Pesaro were sponsored by television, RAI's policy is clearly far the most vigorous. True, they didn't transmit the Godard film they sponsored, *Lotte in Italia*, just as London Weekend didn't transmit *British Sounds*. And RAI's television team at Pesaro seemed a little suspicious of the festival, challenging every interviewee to explain what it had to offer the man in the street. In fact Pesaro is determinedly practical. Last year, for example, the Cuban films it introduced were circulated to thirty-five towns throughout Italy and given over three hundred screenings. The festival urges its films on distributors, subsidises attendance by film society representatives and undertakes non-theatrical distribution itself.

There was only one American film on show (Venice's introduction of a sideshow of American documentaries robbed Pesaro of a number of films they would have liked to show), *The Murder of Fred Hampton*, Mike Gray's vivid and convincing attack on the Chicago police for the killing of the chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Section. Typically it was condemned by some of the Pesaro audience as emotional rather than analytical. Gray insisted it was aimed at his mother and everyone like her who would automatically accept the police version of such events.

Three unexpected pleasures demand mention: *S.P.Q.R.*, in which Volker Koch hilariously hurls Pasolini and Ondine (the 'pope' in *Chelsea Girls*) into a lunatic stew of ancient and modern cinema; Franco Brogi Taviani's *The Substitution*, a disturbing morality set in an un-



Location in Coggeshall: Hugh and Hubert Adams. Photo Barry Sheffield

specified future; and the resurrection of the wildly funny *Happiness*, directed by Alexander Medvedkin in 1935. It was probably the last Soviet silent feature, simply because the Ministry never quite got round to sending Medvedkin his sound equipment.

DEREK HILL

Our Village Film

Not very much happens in Coggeshall, Essex. The wool trade was big in the 14th century but after that the place went down; in the 17th century we burned a witch; there was a cinema for a year or two in the 1940s; and the public convenience that was erected in 1967 made the national press because the parish council minutes on the matter dated back to 1924. In the circumstances you would have thought the natives would be quite stirred up at the thought of a film being shot in the town. But they weren't, and Mrs. West (the Secretary of the Parish Council) had to comb all the pubs on Friday night to recruit even a couple of dozen extras for the Saturday morning. Apart from Mr. West and several little Wests, there was Tommy Cheek the gardener, the septuagenarian Adams twins, Francis Baines the local author and eccentric, a couple of girl students, a collection of commuters, half a dozen other children, and Mrs. Sheffield's daily, who was a bit apprehensive because she hadn't told her husband she was going out.

The extras were called at 7.30 a.m. and shivered in any sheltered nook of the great disintegrating 14th century tithe barn which is under constant threat from the demolitionists. At eight or so the film people arrived, and their clapper-board told us (they couldn't tell us themselves because the only English any of them spoke

was 'Please' and 'Come') that the production was 'I RACCONTI DI CANTERBURY; Regia: P.P. Pasolini.' Which one, everybody wanted to know, was the director? Pastelloni? Pollitosi? Did he make a film called *La Dolce Vita*?

A large stern lady and a diminutive middle-aged man began hauling strange costumes out of a pantechicon and handing them to us now ribald rustics, eyeing us knowingly before settling on each outfit. Some of us were undressed and re-garbed a number of times before they were satisfied—often at a word from a shortish man with dark glasses (surely that couldn't be Pascaloni?). Two ladies left when told (in sign language, what's more) that they must remove all their underclothing before putting on the scratchy wool smocks; but most were game. The clothes may have appeared odd, particularly the shiny Charlie Chaplin bowlers, but the transformation was astonishing: everyone looked as natural in them and as medieval as Breughel people.

The episode seemed to be *The Pardoner's Tale*. The barn had been turned into a tavern interior in which the extras were to be roisterers. They roistered so well that Mrs. Sheffield's daily fell backwards off her stool and split her head open, but took it very well. The scene involved an actor urinating on the assembly from a balcony above. For the shots of the roisterers below, water was squirted from a plastic bottle. Between times the actor was supplied with quantities of beer and coke and tea and at intervals the extras were sent out into the wind while he did his close-ups. Bucolic wit positively flew: 'What was his name? Pissolini?'

The urinating actor was Robin Asquith whom everybody knew because he is in *Please Sir* on television; but the other English actors were all Pasolini discoveries.

Two boys told us he had found them fighting outside a pub in Brixton; another was a bricklayer's hodder whom Pasolini had seen up a ladder; a fourth was a hitchhiker who had quite misunderstood the intentions of Pasolini and his friends when they'd stopped to pick him up, and had tried to run away. (Pratelloni! He must be the one who kept sitting on the floor on a little mat with which an assistant followed him about.)

At lunchtime the wardrobe man went round with a paint brush touching up the costumes (the flesh underneath stayed dyed for weeks and the men's underpants were ruined for ever). The Coggeshall actors were impressed with the mobile canteen (steak and eggs, apple crumble and custard), but worried about the toilet arrangements—not just *where*, but *how* in these entangling garments? The Italians, led by Nino Davoli and Franco Citti, crowded into the local clothier's—astonishing the locals by deciding that Mr. Willsher's gents' wear would be the *dernier cri* back on the Via Veneto. By this time everyone had discovered a great deal about the production. On Wednesday at Layer Marney they had shot an orgy, with fifty art students from Colchester stark naked. They paid double for nudity. By this time any one of us would have been willing; but, alas, it was not required today.

After lunch the extras were reinforced by two peculiar dogs, one like a little white pig and the other with a stitched-up eye which he had lost to a rat. (The country is a wild region.) The time went on to 5 and 6 and 7 p.m. and filming lost its glamour. Everyone was exhausted except the children, who had begun playing together at 7 a.m. and continued to play to order throughout the day; and the Adams twins, who worked again

on Monday and would have been quite prepared to follow the unit on its subsequent travels to St. Osyth's and Canterbury had they been called upon to do so. As it was so late they paid us £5 apiece instead of the agreed £4, and that cheered things up. But few people had yet worked out which was Pinolini or Rolipoli or whatever his name was. Didn't he make a film here before, called *Blow-Up*?

DAVID ROBINSON

Bengal

No one refers any more to a new wave in the Bengali cinema. Its four leading directors—Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Tapan Sinha—are now middle-aged. The Bengali film industry has been reduced to such financial straits, and there is so much violence even in the Tollygunge Studios, that Ray has been cutting his films in Bombay, Sinha and Sen have both been making films in Hindi, and there is talk of a large Bengali exodus to the more commercialised but comparatively more stable conditions of Bombay.

In this context, the return, after six years of drift, of Ritwik Ghatak to shoot a film on the present political situation in West Bengal (and not the more fashionable problem of East Bengal) is an act of artistic, intellectual and box-office courage; shooting the film in Calcutta requires physical courage, too. After Ray, Ghatak is one of the more internationally known Indian directors. His *Ajantrik*, a film about a man's devotion to his vintage car, first brought him international attention at the Venice Festival in 1958. Thanks to Georges Sadoul, the film was shown in France, Belgium and Italy; in India it barely paid its way. Ghatak's three major films, a virtual trilogy on the two Bengals, *Partition* and the middle-class refugee, were tremendous

successes in East Bengal; and ironically enough they have become highly topical in the context of Bangla Desh, since they explore the cultural affinity of the two Bengals and the harsh economic problems common to both.

'After *Subarna Rekha* in 1965,' Ghatak says, 'it was virtual self-exile until today. The reasons for this are first personal, then financial, then a feeling of exhaustion and the realisation one had nothing new to say, and lastly my characteristic irresponsibility.' Now, from the ashes of those wasted years, Ritwik Ghatak is about to be reborn, with the autobiographical film he hopes to complete early in 1972. 'It will be absolutely political in the sense that I have no political commitments but will be showing what is going on right now in West Bengal. It will be called *Jukti Tokko Aar Goppo* (*Stories and Arguments*). The story, the scenario, the direction and the music will be mine. I will play the hero, my wife will play my wife, my son my son and my daughter my daughter. The story begins with a drunkard (me) whose wife and son are leaving him. As they leave, a young girl enters in a torn sari, the spirit of Bangla Desh. From there on, the man and the girl and a young man wander over Bengal, its industrial belt, its small towns, its forests and the city of Calcutta, until they come up against some Naxalites in a forest. Towards the end, there is a confrontation between the Naxalites and the decaying, drunken intellectual, in whom, at least momentarily, they recognise a kindred spirit, a non-conformist.'

Ghatak says this will be his most serious and his most complex film. And probably his most interesting, for it will be a self-crucifixion as well as a resurrection.

AMITA MALIK

Medieval people: Coggeshall extras in 'I Racconti di Canterbury'



1971: Obituary

DECEMBER '70: John Paddy Carstairs, British director, mainly of light comedy (*The Chiltern Hundreds*, *Up in the World*); Charles Ruggles, ubiquitous American character actor, often seen as harassed bumbler (*Charley's Aunt*, *If I Had a Million*), latterly in Disney features; Suzanne Dalbert, French-born actress brought to Hollywood by Hal Wallis (*The Accused*, *Target Unknown*); Lenore Ulric, tempestuous American supporting actress (*Camille*).

JANUARY: 'Bronco Billy' Anderson, first of the cowboy heroes (*The Great Train Robbery*), later co-founder of Essanay, for which he made hundreds of one-reel Westerns; Georges Van Parys, French composer (*Le Million*, *Casque d'Or*, *French Cancan*); John Dall, Forties leading man, one of the murderers in *Rope*; Kermit Maynard, stunt man and supporting actor, mainly in Westerns; Douglas Shearer, American pioneer of sound technique; Robert Wyler, actor, scriptwriter, producer, brother of William.

FEBRUARY: Fernandel, rubber-faced clown of French cinema; Jay C. Flippen, tough American supporting actor, often seen as cop or sheriff (*Thunder Bay*, *The Wild One*); Seth Holt, British director (*Taste of Fear*, *Station Six Sahara*); Tullio Carminati, debonair leading man, seen opposite Grace Moore in *One Night of Love*.

MARCH: Borden Chase, scriptwriter (*Red River*, *Winchester '73*); Bebe Daniels, popular star of the silent screen, and in the Fifties equally popular on radio as scatterbrained American in London; Leland Hayward, American producer (*Mister Roberts*, *Spirit of St. Louis*); Basil Dearden, British director, mainly associated with Fifties 'realism' (*The Blue Lamp*, *Sapphire*, *Victim*); Patrice Pouget, French cameraman, gave Lelouch his gloss; Harold Lloyd, bespectacled comic genius.

APRIL: Cecil Parker, veteran British character actor, usually as amiable bungler or gentlemanly rogue; Edmund Lowe, suave American actor, Quirt in *What Price Glory*?; Sergei Zakariadze, Russian actor, rumbustious peasant hero of *A Soldier's Father*; Terence de Marney, British actor, usually something sinister in the shadows; Armand Denis, friend of the animals; Lennie Hayton, musical director of some of the great musicals; Werner Peters, German heavy; Ralph Wheelwright, Marion Davies' Cosmopolitan publicist, wrote *Man of 1,000 Faces*.

MAY: Audie Murphy, star of scores of low-budget Westerns; Chips Rafferty, rangy Australian actor (*The Sundowners*); Jean Vilar, French actor and director of Théâtre National Populaire, seen in several films; Rodd Redwing, Indian actor for DeMille and tutor of many Hollywood fast guns; Alice

Tissot, veteran French actress, often as concierge (*The Italian Straw Hat*, *Ignace*); Jean d'Eaubonne, designer of *Le Sang d'un Poète*, *Le Plaisir*.

JUNE: E. V. H. Emmett, the voice behind Gaumont newsreels; Gene Gerrard, British musical comedy star of the Thirties; Piero Gherardi, Italian designer, mainly for Fellini; Michael Rennie, British leading man (*The Robe*, *Island in the Sun*), later TV's 'Third Man'; Ellaline Terris, veteran British actress; Thomas Gomez, American heavy (*Key Largo*, *Johnny O'Clock*); Walter Jurrmann, Austrian-born Hollywood composer; Herbert J. Biberman, scriptwriter and director, one of the Hollywood Ten.

JULY: Louis Armstrong, 'Satchmo' to millions; Ub Iwerks, animator of Mickey Mouse; Van Heflin, dependable American actor (*Shane*, *3.10 to Yuma*); Glenda Farrell, wise-cracking blonde of Warner films of the Thirties (*Little Caesar*, *Johnny Eager*); Alan Rawsthorne, composer (*Burma Victory*, *The Captive Heart*); Cliff Edwards, ukulele-playing singer, the voice of Jiminy Cricket; Russell E. Day, cameraman for Capra and George Stevens; Norman Reilly Raine, Thirties scriptwriter (*The Life of Emile Zola*); Sergei Nolbandov, Ealing producer.

AUGUST: Spyros P. Skouras, almost the last tycoon, president of Fox and initiator of CinemaScope; Günther Rittau, German cameraman, associate of Freund and Hoffmann; Paul Lukas, Hungarian-born American actor (*Strange Cargo*, *Watch on the Rhine*); Horace McMahon, American supporting actor, usually playing cops or gangsters; C. Denier Warren, chubby American character comedian in British films of the Thirties.

SEPTEMBER: Bella Darvi, French actress, brief Hollywood career as Zanuck protégée (*The Egyptian*); Billy Gilbert, American comic, excitable stooge for Laurel and Hardy and the Marx Bros.; Spring Byington, American actress, often played scatterbrained maternal types; Pier Angeli, Italian actress in Hollywood and Britain, never quite found the parts to match her talent (*Teresa*, *The Angry Silence*).

OCTOBER: Chester Conklin, moustachioed comic of Keystone and Sennett slapstick; Mikhail Romm, Russian director (*Lenin in October*, *Ordinary Fascism*); Linda Pini, star of Italian silent cinema; William Costello, the voice of Popeye.

NOVEMBER: Raymond Hatton, veteran American character actor, old-timer comic sidekick in scores of Westerns; Martha Vickers, Forties star (*The Big Sleep*, *Ruthless*); Paul Terry, creator of Terrytoons; Betty Bronson, silent star (*Ben Hur*, *The Singing Fool*); Gladys Cooper, indomitably aristocratic actress, seldom at her best on the screen (*The Pirate*, *Separate Tables*).

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN

Beverly Walker



Peter Fonda filming 'The Hired Hand'

It is now a cliché that the phenomenal success of *Easy Rider* in 1969 turned the American film industry upside down. The Hollywood money men suddenly began to look for new directors, with three key priorities: youth, subject matter with youth appeal, and a low budget. The powerful unions began to buckle under the tide, making unprecedented concessions. And there were three further, and significant, offshoots. 1) Established actors and producers decided that they, too, could make a movie, and rock stars turned from their frenzied audiences to the relatively more serene occupation of movie-making. 2) Record companies (Fantasy) and other well-heeled American industries (Quaker Oats) began to make money available for films. In addition, money from 'independent', often unrevealed, sources began to turn up for non-union, low budget pictures, often of the hard-sell genre variety. 3) New companies were formed to produce movies. Cannon Films got off to a good start with *Joe*, a film which appealed to the politically conservative element (though they deny that was their intention); and Donald Rugoff's Cinema V got together with Max Palevsky of Xerox to form Cinema X. While Cannon has made several films since *Joe*, Cinema X has yet, however, to get a picture into production.

Even on its knees, Hollywood remains the centre of American film production. Its residual glamour still attracts wealthy dilettantes; the two major universities (UCLA and USC), along with half a dozen other colleges, are graduating hundreds of potential producers, directors or writers every year. Many of them remain in Hollywood. It is impossible to say how many people made movies for the first time in the last eighteen months. Many were low-budget (\$60,000) films, often of a political or

documentary nature, and will never reach a wide audience. A number of new distribution companies sprang into existence (or those already formed expanded) for the purpose of distributing these and other non-commercial films to college campuses and film societies. For this reason alone, the 16 mm. market is booming.

Here, however, I am concerned with films financed in or by Hollywood, with the intention of reaching a wide audience. What follows is a brief rundown on a number of

first films made recently by new directors. Only a few of the pictures are doing well at the box-office, and several have yet to be released.

Desperate Characters, written and directed by Frank Gilroy, whose previous experience had been in theatre, and *Little Murders*, which Alan Arkin directed from Jules Feiffer's play, are the only films that deal with the horrors of city life. This seems odd, since the vast majority of America's population now lives in cities or sprawling suburbs, and the quality of city life has become a major political and social issue. *Desperate Characters* received generally good notices and is doing rather well in its initial release; *Little Murders* collected even better reviews and began well at the box-office, but failed to sustain its momentum as it was released outside the major cities. Alan Arkin was a thoroughly experienced theatre director and had already made a number of short films, so *Little Murders* has a well-made look to it. But it lacks some of the impact of the play, partly because the performances are directed towards slapstick, New York style, rather than the black farce that Feiffer had written.

Clint Eastwood formed his own Malpaso Company with Universal, for whom three of his recent films were made, and directed and starred in *Play Misty for Me*. What



'Kotch': Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau

would have been considered a 'B' movie twenty years ago is now being given a major promotional campaign and put into big theatres. (Not one movie starring Eastwood has yet lost money.) His film, which tells the story of a Lothario disc jockey terrorised by a pathological woman (Jessica Walter) with whom he had casually gone to bed one night, is chiefly notable for Miss Walter's really excellent performance and the fine photography of Bruce Surtees (son of Robert Surtees). Eastwood's direction is certainly competent, and at times better than that. The film could have done with a stronger screenplay, but it seems assured of a neat profit.

Jack Lemmon took a sizeable chance with *Kotch*, the story of an old man whose son and daughter-in-law try to move him into a 'Home for Elderly Citizens'. Although American movies have recently taken a strong turn towards nostalgia (*Summer of '42*, *The Last Picture Show*), the subject of elderly people is a sensitive one here; as well as breaking the rule of youth appeal. However, Lemmon handles the material very well, albeit in a traditional Hollywood way; and Walter Matthau's brilliant, subdued performance as the old man, successfully walking the line between comedy and pathos, seems to contain not only the best of what he has done in past films, but also the best of Lemmon's work as an actor. There is a sentimental soundtrack, but it is used with a minimum of manipulation, and the film is very touching. It opened at Radio City Music Hall and seems assured of success. *Kotch* may, in fact, turn out to be one of those rare pivotal films which again throw the studios into a tailspin. We could be in for a slew of films about old people...

Larry Turman produced and directed *The Marriage of a Young Stockbroker*, from the novel by Charles Webb (who wrote the book from which *The Graduate* was adapted) and a screenplay by Lorenzo Semple (*Pretty Poison*). Although he hired first-rate people—Laszlo Kovacs as cameraman, Fred Steinkamp as editor, Richard Benjamin and

Joanna Shimkus to play the couple whose marriage is threatened by the husband's voyeuristic tendencies—the movie does not quite work. It is pervaded throughout by a *déjà vu* feeling, as of *The Graduate* ten years after, and Turman was attacked by most critics for trying to cash in on that film's success.

But Turman is one of Hollywood's more interesting producers, and his career indicates that he is willing to take chances on new directors (Noel Black on *Pretty Poison*), performers (Dustin Hoffman, a complete unknown before *The Graduate*), or on commercially doubtful material (*The Great White Hope*, *Flin-Flam Man*). He is a man of considerable charm and intelligence, and also something of a paradox in Hollywood. He lives in quintessential Hollywood style but produces odd-ball movies, most of which have not been very successful commercially. (The new film, ironically, is doing rather well at the box-office.)

Turman readily acknowledges that the critical accusations of imitation hurt, though he expected them. 'I'm very attracted to Webb's characters. Someone who's kind of sad and screwed-up and it permeates his life. Finally, he has to find his own way. A lot of characters in movies I've chosen to produce were like that. I left the textile business after five years. I was very successful. Once I made the decision to get out, I made a better connection with myself. I've loved all the movies I produced, but they never quite came out the way I saw them. I never felt ready to direct until *Marriage*.'

But Turman says he was far from satisfied with his own film; once again, it didn't turn out as he envisaged it. 'In retrospect, I made two big errors. I was so emotionally connected to the material that I failed to get it on the screen. The character's voyeurism was intended as a metaphor—it was his escape, his narcotic. Anyone's emotions are often at variance with his behaviour. There were times in the picture when I was aware of the emotion, but I played too much on

the behaviour.' Also, Turman feels that his double role of producer-director affected the picture. 'I needed someone to do for me what I did for others. As a producer, I always thought of myself as a sounding board, and I used to keep the pressures off the director so that he could go on making his movie. The irony is that I've worked with first time directors. I used to say, "It doesn't matter if we go over schedule a week or so." But I didn't allow myself the same privilege. I pressured myself; I was too aware of production values.' I asked Turman if he brought in anyone whose judgment he trusted to look at the picture at any stage before turning it over to the studio (Fox). 'I had a dumb egotistical thing: I had to do it all myself. When I got away from it for a few weeks and came back and looked at it, I knew I had to make some changes and asked for a couple of weeks' time. They wouldn't allow it.'

Of the ten films directed by younger, less established men, three were made over a year ago and have yet to be released. The American Film Institute's only feature film to date is *In Pursuit of Treasure*, directed by the underground film-maker Stanton Kaye (*Brandy in the Wilderness*). The few people who have seen it—I am not one of them—say it is a strange piece about Indians being slaughtered for gold. Kaye is generally considered to be extremely talented, and the reasons for the film's non-release are unknown. He is more fortunate than most of the other newcomers, because the AFI is certainly giving him all the time he wants to experiment with the editing of the film.

Another film virtually unseen by anybody is *All-American Boy*, written and directed by Charles Eastman. From what one knows about the film, it appears to be thematically similar to *Five Easy Pieces*, written by Eastman's sister, Adrienne Joyce. Jon Voight plays the title role of a Golden Glove boxer; he has a knack with women, but is rather lost and rootless and ultimately walks away from everything, as did Bobby Dupea in *Pieces*. The production was cloaked in secrecy and no one seems to know why the film has not yet been released.

The Christian Licorice Store, the story of the rise and fall of a superstar tennis player (Beau Bridges), was directed by Jim Frawley from a script by Floyd Mutrux. Frawley directed many of the best segments of the 'Monkees' television series, and has talent and imagination. The script, however, was thin, and Frawley was under the supervision of Floyd Mutrux, who co-produced and did much of the initial editing. The film was put through the sneak preview route last year and audiences did not react favourably. Frawley then did considerable re-editing and the film was vastly improved. It has some lovely moments, particularly one in which Jean Renoir appears. If the costs of launching a picture weren't so high, it would undoubtedly have been released by now.

Floyd Mutrux made his own directorial debut with *Dusty and Sweets McGee*, one of half a dozen films dealing with the subject of narcotics. Made in Los Angeles with Bill Fraker (*Bullitt*) as cameraman, the film's cast mingles real-life addicts with a few professional actors; and Fraker's lyrical photography, counterpointing the realism

of the needles and narcotics paraphernalia, gives the film a most peculiar ambience. In his attempt to create a fictional documentary about the horrors of dope, Mutrux succeeded only in giving the movie the look of a slick rip-off, a commercial for heroin. Produced by Michael Laughlin and Mutrux, the film was sold to Warner Brothers at a tidy profit, but did not do too well at the box-office. This probably has less to do with its quality, however, than with its content. Narcotics is another sensitive subject in the United States, albeit over-exposed (mostly from television); and none of the films with this as a central theme has ever been commercially successful.

Deadhead Miles was directed by Vernon Zimmerman from a brilliant screenplay by Terry Malick, and features Alan Arkin as a zany truckdriver with a knack for getting into trouble. Zimmerman had previously made a number of experimental short films which reveal a rather unusual, quixotic sensibility. With its roots in the Theatre of the Absurd it is also rather loving and compassionate—a strange mixture. But what appeared to be an ideal combination of talents doesn't quite work on film. Malick, a Texan who studied philosophy at Cambridge, thought he was writing a down-home story about simple people (although I would disagree); Zimmerman was directing a comedy of the absurd; and Arkin was playing farce. Zimmerman wanted to edit the film himself, and did, but it was subsequently re-edited, mainly by Arkin. There was bitterness among all these people, but Paramount will be releasing the film later this year.

It is obvious, at this point, that films made by new directors have had a rough go of it. The story gets worse.

Jack Nicholson directed *Drive, He Said*, based on the novel by Jeremy Larner and scripted by Larner and Nicholson. The film was shunned at last year's Cannes Festival, reviews in the United States ranged from medium cool to vindictive, and it has been a



Karen Black in 'Drive, He Said'

commercial failure. Its multi-level story centres on a star college basketball player (William Pepper), torn in different directions. His roommate (Mike Margotta) is the campus revolutionary leader and puts him down both for toeing the athletic line of the coach (Bruce Dern) and for his affair with Olive (Karen Black), a professor's wife. The film explores the relationships among these people in a fresh way, and the performances are all good.



Tuesday Weld in 'A Safe Place'

Nicholson has a bold visual attack, using close-ups (of objects as readily as of people), zooms, fast pans, slow motion. But this is also an extremely controlled film. Its underlying theme of male camaraderie must, however, occasionally make women wince, since Nicholson has imbued all the male characters with a dignity not accorded the women. Karen Black is the only woman character of any significance; and except for two brief moments of rebellion she is shown as little more than a sexual object/mother figure. In the controversial sexual encounter between her and Pepper, she is taken from behind and the camera focuses on her face and pleasure. Pepper seems very far away, in control and uninvolved. The nightmarish attempted rape of Olive by Margotta shows her terror and dishevelment in a most unattractive and ambiguous light. One can't but sympathise with the woman-hating radical. In contrast to the men's scenes in the locker room and gymnasium, where they are close and care about each other, the women are shown cheerleading or in supermarkets. Communication between them is virtually non-existent, either ritualistic or with a man as the pivotal point.

Nicholson's film has been too elliptical for most people; and although it is supposed to be contemporary, I found myself thinking of it as a 1950s film. Nonetheless, it has integrity: it pleads no cause, plays into nobody's fantasies, and avoids manipulation. It deserved a better fate.

The most experimental film by a new director is *A Safe Place*, written and directed by Henry Jaglom. A small cabal of boozers were in turn booed at its New York Festival première, making it, rather than Peter Watkins' *Punishment Park*, the Festival's most controversial film. It's an involved, non-linear study of time and memory, in which everything is seen through the mind of the girl played by Tuesday Weld. Unable to recapture the freedom and idealism of her childhood (she says she remembers being able to fly when she was a

little girl), she also cannot free herself from its pain and thus is emotionally paralysed. She meets a magician (Orson Welles) whose conceit is that he can make things disappear. Flying, disappearing, freedom, death, converge as a metaphor for the need for something outside ourselves to provide answers to the problems of existence. Tuesday Weld's fragile innocence, the use of music as a seductive thread throughout the film, and lovely photography, all belie an undertone of despair verging on bitterness. Jaglom acknowledges that it is completely autobiographical—parts of it were filmed in the apartment where he grew up—and says that he cast Tuesday Weld because he had never met anyone more like himself.

The anti-intellectual approach of *A Safe Place* (Jaglom's attempt to convey the sense of time emotionally), together with its non-narrative structure, infuriated most of the major critics. Although I don't think the film is entirely successful, it is certainly the most daring picture made by any American director—new or otherwise—last year.

The youngest director to make his first feature in 1971 is 27-year-old Bill Norton, writer-director of *Cisco Pike*. It's the story of a down and out musician (Kris Kristofferson) who has turned to selling marijuana to earn a living; he promises his girl friend (Karen Black) that he will give it up, only to be blackmailed by a desperate policeman (Gene Hackman) into one final, frenzied weekend of dealing.

Cisco Pike is truly a Los Angeles film: its ambience could never have been attained anywhere else. The camera moves from Venice, the hippie-artist section of Los Angeles, through the freeways and into the tennis courts and houses of the rich as Cisco sells the 100 kilos of marijuana. Norton wanted to make a film showing how over-strict law enforcement (particularly affecting students and blacks) had made criminals of thousands of people. This is implicit in the film, but it is far from a polemic. On the contrary, it is a concoction of surprises (Viva providing a brief but

hilarious few moments), with Kristofferson, a popular country and western singer, giving a touching and authentic performance. Norton had his share of problems with the studio, but the final result is a good deal more hopeful than that of most of the other new directors.

Universal financed films by two new directors last year, as part of their special programme under the supervision of Ned Tanen. *Silent Running* is directed by Douglas Trumbull, the man responsible for many of the special effects in *2001*. His own film has a few, very well done, special effects, but is mainly the story of a botanist (Bruce Dern) alone on a space ship; he has been living there eight years, in charge of a government programme to grow gigantic botanical forests in space, with the expectation of eventually returning them to earth. *Silent Running* is the only one of the new films to deal with the fashionable subject of ecology; but although Trumbull shows promise as a director, he was handicapped by an indifferent script and a budget not large enough really to meet the needs of the story.

The other film financed by Universal is *The Hired Hand*, Peter Fonda's much criticised Western. I couldn't connect with the film, but its intentions were obviously serious. Fonda told me: 'I wanted to make a movie dealing with the elements—fire, rain, water, air—man and his relationship to these elements... his sense of discovery. And to explore his relationship with a woman. I wanted to do it as a Western because I think that genre is the Greek drama of America. You can use large symbols and attain a perspective that you lose in a modern 'slice of life' picture. For me, it was a symphony.'

That Fonda has good ideas for films is obvious (*Easy Rider* was his idea); but perhaps he should write his own scripts. Although I haven't read Alan Sharp's script for *The Hired Hand*, it would appear that his ideas were somewhat different from those of Fonda, and that the film suffered from the clash of different sensibilities. And although Fonda was given complete freedom by the studio while making the film, the promotional handling of it on release was incredibly poor. In the United States, one just doesn't premiere a film in Des Moines, Iowa; which is where *The Hired Hand* opened.

In an article about first films and new directors, it seemed imperative to talk as I have done about box-office and critical response. The brief renaissance following *Easy Rider* is now over. The studios have retrenched and new directors are finding it virtually impossible to get financing for a film unless they go the porn-horror-violence route. The ability of many directors to obtain finance for a second film is contingent upon box-office reaction; which in turn is strongly influenced by the critics. It is probably not off the mark to say that films mentioned in this article would long ago have been released were it not that the producers or studios know they have a flawed piece of work, and are scared of the probable critical response.

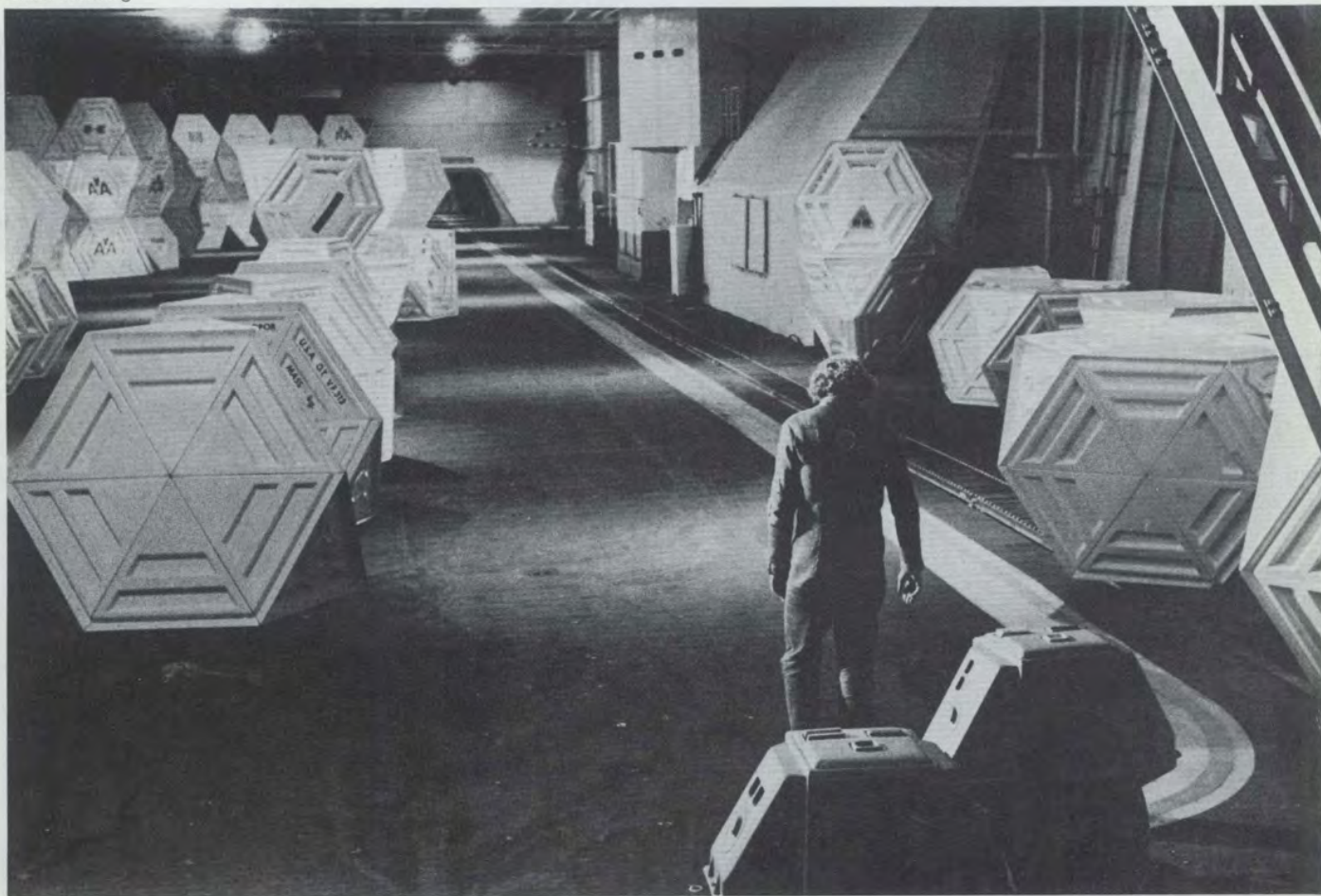
The American moviegoing public remains as capricious as ever, but the critics must take some of the responsibility for the crashing failure of many of these new films. There is in America a critical establishment, centred in New York, which has enormous influence over the fate of a film. Most films

open in New York in order to get the nationwide coverage provided by magazines and major television networks. And although many studios deny being influenced by the critics, the evidence does not support this. The amount of money allocated for promotional purposes, the number of prints made, the kind of theatre a film goes into, bears a direct relationship to the critical reaction.

New York critics are constantly crying for better, more personal American films. They are more inclined, however, to be tolerant of an uneven film from abroad than of an imperfect movie made in America. Nestor Almendros, the French cameraman, was recently accorded the honour of a full piece in the Sunday *New York Times*; he deserved it, but that same attention has not been given to any one of half-a-dozen American cinematographers who also deserve it. The general level of film criticism in America has probably never been so high. But the influence of the *auteur* theory, at first a good one, has passed the point of being constructive, or even relevant, to contemporary American film-making. The majority of the New York critics are Easterners who make only perfunctory trips to Los Angeles; they have made little attempt, unlike critics in the other arts, to familiarise themselves with the problems of the industry. The vindictive, personal attacks some of these critics have made on directors is inexcusable. If they really care about films, they should heed the advice one of them gave Jack Nicholson in a review of his film: 'For Christ's sake, look out where you're going.'*

* From Robert Creeley's poem 'I Know a Man', quoted in *Drive, He Said*.

'Silent Running'





THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY

Joseph Losey directs Alain Delon and Romy Schneider in *The Assassination of Trotsky*. Delon plays Jacques Mornard, who in 1940 murdered Trotsky in his Mexican retreat; Richard Burton is Trotsky. The script is by Nicholas Mosley, and the film is being shot in Mexico and in Rome.



When is a Dirty Film...?

David Robinson

'Trash': Joe Dallesandro, Holly Woodlawn



The Amsterdam Wet Dream Festival probably represents as fairly as possible the limits of free expression which the cinema has currently reached. Organised by the Sexual Egalitarian and Libertarian Fraternity (SELF), an offshoot of the Dutch-based *Suck* magazine, its ostensible purpose is to promote a competition, with money prizes, for erotic films of all sorts and from all sources; though its ulterior purpose is an affectionate get-together of SELF supporters. Very reliable people who were at the first Festival, in 1970, agreed convincingly that after the first couple of sessions it needed a lot of pluck to face more films of such minimal aesthetic merit. The 1971 experience was strikingly different. There was tedious, overblown and sheer bad stuff; but the proportion was less than you would expect in a major feature festival like Venice or Cannes. The Festival convincingly confirmed the now familiar assertion that as the market in what must (broadly and misleadingly) be classed as pornographic cinema becomes more and more competitive, film-makers are obliged to make their films better—in terms of conventional artistic qualities like intelligence, entertainment, human interest—rather than dirtier.

This seemed true even of the American hard-core. The main prize-winner, *School-girl*, adopted a traditional porno formula (the heroine chooses sexual mores as the theme of her community studies thesis and embarks with enthusiasm on original research), but the development showed genuine wit, a real grasp of character, even sometimes a sympathetic curiosity about the human relationships involved, for instance, in a marriage whose partners are driven to seek the catalyst of a third party to stimulate declining sexual interest. *Confessions of a Male Groupie*, directed by Tom de Simone and Nick Grippo, although in a necessarily limited way, quite conscientiously and sympathetically examined homosexuality in the hippy and drop-out scene, and revealed moments of perceptive fantasy in the depiction of a faggots' moll, gross, greedy, yet as eager as the rest of us to be loved and to love.

There were inevitably representatives of that most equivocal of genres, films which while purporting to offer serious documentation of pornography and sexuality quite frankly themselves exploit the commercial appeal of the subject. The voyeurist hypocrisy of the style was most evident in *Sub Rosa Rising*, an eager exposé of the sexual activity of San Francisco, directed by Jerry Abrams. *Room Service* could be forgiven much for its anthology of old pornographic films dating back to the Twenties, and revealing how little innovation or variation in presentation there has been in the years between. Ole Ege's *Pornographie* was on a different level again: calculated pornography, a collage of erotic facts and fantasies (varied pick-up techniques; a group of ladies merrily and compulsively exchanging clothes faster and faster) which did not disdain humour and even an occasional lyrical touch.

Inevitably, the worst and the best of the films were to be found among the private and independently produced work. Not all depended upon direct erotic pictorialisation. There was a group of brilliant little essays by the American Sebastian Stewart, for

instance, which devised highly erotic images out of the simple depiction of a hand squeezing a balloon, a car going through a wash, a golf ball disintegrating in stop-action. Len Richmond's *Moist Dream* (made at Berkeley) was also a piece of inspired animation, making original use of graphic sources rarely explored by film-makers, for instance the compelling perspectives of sixteenth and seventeenth century architectural prints.

Animation can be more aggressive: Siegfried Claude's *Snow White and the Seven Lovers* (now arrived at the second of its intended twelve parts) relates its story in animation which is close enough to Disney for parody but far enough away to permit its ribald sexual images the energy of oriental erotic painting. However startling it is to see the lovable dwarfs as horrid little satyrs with vast and insatiable phalli, Snow White as a nymphomaniac and Prince Charming as a necrophiliac, there does seem a certain moral purpose in exposing the darker side of folk and fairy lore. Nor is there any doubt of the fanatical moral intent of Lon van Keulen's *Meat Eater's Madness*, which adopts a style strongly reminiscent of *Un Chien Andalou* and uses repellent sexual images (a lady feeding her vagina with sliced cooked meats, a man making a penis sandwich) for the purpose of an angry vegetarian tract.

One of the prize-winners was *Hot Pants* by Peter de Rome, an English underground film-maker working in America. De Rome's work is especially noteworthy. Entirely personal, never until now shown or intended to be shown publicly, it has nothing in common with any ordinary notions of pornography or obscenity, but represents the work of an extremely able, instinctual, private film-maker who has chosen to work—almost incidentally it would seem—entirely in sexual themes and images. The best of his films have a strongly romantic and idealistic tendency—*Encounter*, in which a group of strangers meet and make contact entirely through tactile discovery of one another (this was shot as *ciné-vérité*); *Exposure*, a rather complex study of a young man's erotic attraction to his own alter ego; *Fire Island Kids*, an exhilarated, utterly imprudent portrait of sexual affection (again actuality: the lovers asked that their infatuation should be recorded). Technically the films (others are *Second Coming*, *Help Wanted*, *Moulages*, and all are shot on Super 8 mm.) have unusual assurance and fluidity; the content is marked by a warmth and delight in the people and their smiles and their pleasures, qualities quite alien to the hard stuff of commercial porn. De Rome's films deserve to be seen; but the factual content of their images is such that no existing censorship body is likely to approve them.

Here at Amsterdam, one might suppose, was ample matter against which to try definitions of obscenity, to assess the potential to deprave, corrupt, offend or arouse prurient and lewd thoughts, of the strongest cinema fare currently available.

'It's never the chap making the complaint who is being depraved or corrupted,' said one of the *Oz* Counsel. 'It's never Counsel who has to deal with the case who is depraved or corrupted. It's never the jurors

who are depraved or corrupted by looking at it. It's him over there. It's always some other person who has been affected.' Perhaps one reason is that it is simply more difficult to explore your own reactions than to guess at those of others. But trying frankly to judge the effect of the Wet Dream Festival on myself, I cannot pretend to any impression of being affronted, sullied, debauched, over-stimulated or driven into the streets of Amsterdam to emulate the happenings on the screen. I was not repelled, except perhaps by a French commercial adaptation of de Sade's *Justine*. Nor was I bored by graphic exposition of sex. Even though the representation of sexual behaviour can rouse to anger when it is truly obscene—exploiting sex, making it ugly or vulgar for the sake of profit—I mistrust either the veracity or the health of anyone who alleges that he is bored with any form of its representation (as the suaver members of the Longford Sex Safari were inclined to do).

To continue for a moment more these personal impressions, I even suspected a positively beneficial result from the experience. Perhaps only temporarily, I felt genuinely closer to my fellows, less puzzled by them, less afraid of them, able to talk to them more easily; more aware of the bodies, the feelings, the emotions we had in common. Any such therapy was genuinely unsought. I went to Amsterdam professionally, a bit shamefaced, and certainly sceptical. Of course these reactions to the Amsterdam experience may be the hallucinations of someone who actually has been depraved and corrupted. There is no sure way out of the chicken-and-egg dilemma of it all. How can we ever judge if something is depraving and corrupting if the judge himself is vulnerable to the effects, exposed to being corrupted and depraved and so unfitted to judge?

Yet I would like to think that my responses were those of a still clear and independent judgment. And in that judgment I am bound to say that though I found much in the Amsterdam programme that was

Peter de Rome's 'Fire Island Kids'



pornographic in the basic dictionary sense of the word, I found nothing obscene either in the dictionary definition ('offensive to modesty or decency; expressing or suggesting lewd thoughts') or in the legal meaning of the term:

An article shall be deemed to be obscene if, taken as a whole, persons shall be corrupted or depraved by it if they see it, hear it, or read it.

(British definition as stated by Judge Argyle in the *Oz* trial)

Whether to the average person, applying community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interests.

(U.S. legal test as restated in *U.S. v. Roth*, 1957)

Equally I know that Mrs. Whitehouse or Malcolm Muggeridge, most of my aunts, and perhaps even a majority of intelligent people, would find practically every one of the films (except *perhaps*, oddly enough, the *Justine*, whose ugliness was not in identifiable, factual representation) deeply shocking; and would honestly assert their power to affront, to corrupt, to deprave, to appeal to prurient interests. And this does not prove anything one way or the other about the films; or make me less or more moral or responsible or insensitive than the other people. All it demonstrates is how deeply subjective is any evaluation of obscenity. Indeed to the extent that the most wilful and ill-intentioned attempt to arouse prurient excitement must always fail of its effect in the case of some individuals, it is reasonable to assert that obscenity is entirely a matter of subjective evaluation, is *always* in the eye of the beholder. It is this factor which explains the difficulties of rational discussion of obscenity and of arriving at or demonstrating a legal definition, and the degree of emotion that enters any such debate as the *Oz* trial.

As an extreme example of this subjectivity, the Festival of Light cites as an instance of obscenity promoted by the media (along with *Oh! Calcutta!*, *Myra Breckinridge*, *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *The Devils*) a schools sex hygiene programme which 'told the listening children that [masturbation] was perfectly normal, and that even the most "repressed" people were sexual privately. Masturbation was still generally regarded as taboo, which was a mistake.' Now this statement, which is thus surprisingly but deeply shocking to some people, would seem to others only a simple and useful piece of information. The difference is between those who think it proper to conceal or to reveal a fact. Obscenity in fact is conditioned only by degrees of taboo or secrecy. This is most readily seen in language. Change a single letter of the words *luck* and *hunt* and they acquire a magical, emotive and alarming character which has nevertheless been given to them only by a convention of taboo and disuse. Similarly, it is only the convention not to discuss or to see certain sexual matters and scenes which makes them 'obscene' when they are revealed or spoken about. ('While filth was revealed in the past,' expostulated the Festival of Light, 'it was done surreptitiously. Now it is being shown openly as being "normal".') Perhaps this idea of revealing the occult may be some explanation

of the obscure etymological origin in Latin of the word *obscene*. It is not accidental of course that it is also the guilt and secrecy surrounding it that has given much of the deeper (and often more perilous) pleasures and fascination to sex. Revelation disrupts the pleasures of sin as well as the taboos.

This factor, the direct relationship of taboo and obscenity (which can only be strictly applied in the area of sexual matter), is familiar enough to seem like a truism. But in the current climate, where the Wet Dream Festival and the Festival of Light co-exist (perhaps in ignorance of one another) it acquires a greater significance. Again it has become a truism that in the past, when community standards within our society had some sort of unity and coherence, standards and definitions of obscenity also seemed a little clearer. Today, when there is no longer a single standard, when the attitudes and the modes of social communication of different generations—and other distinct social groups—are widely dissimilar, a definition of obscenity becomes almost impossible. What different moral vistas appear in the eyes of different beholders was revealed most startlingly in the *Oz* trial, where the matter which so distressed the court was the product of the very infants whom society is ostensibly most deeply concerned to protect.

What results from this situation is a potentially dangerous disorientation and

'The Devils' and the backlash



disorganisation of that machinery which society has built up for protection of (what the American lawyers call) 'community standards'. Where there are no identifiable community standards, because the community is divided—'polarised' is the current term—the danger is that some arbitrary standard may be applied, which will ignore—even repress—the standards of significant sectors of the community. And already we may be seeing the results of this process in present and practical terms.

The voice of the 'Backlash' (a significantly violent word) has always been with us. Longfords there have been since the dawn of civilisation, and Mrs. Whitehouse has been with us for a good fifteen years. But through most of the last decade, with the liberalisation most dramatically signalled by the Trial of Lady Chatterley, they must have felt that they were crying in the wilderness. Now, however, with an evident and inevitable popular reaction against too much freedom of expression, the Backlash find (to change the metaphor) that they are going with the tide; and the Festival of Light has the inspiration of a no longer mythical silent majority as well as that of the Lord. A lot of decent, unthinking citizens see in them the champions of order and wholesome national values. So the threats of the Festival of Light in the area of the cinema must be taken very seriously.

The Festival urges the Government: 'To set up a Film Council independent of the film industry so as to secure more effective control of the suitability of films for public exhibition than is at present provided.' Peter Thompson, one of the activists, urges supporters to press M.P.s to support this idea. 'The next thing is to approach your local councils. You may have heard of my attempts to get Ken Russell's film *The Devils* off the London screens because of its blasphemy, obscenity and repugnant taste. Get your local councils to bann (sic) films like *The Devils*; engage your local councils to set up special committees to look at all films with 'X' certificates passed by the British Board of Film Censors like they do at Southend.' And, indeed, *The Devils* has already been banned by some local authorities.

The courts, the ultimate sanction against 'obscenity', have apparently been stiffened by, or are part of, the same atmosphere. The *Oz* trial was a bad trial; but the sense of the appeal judgment was unequivocal, a distinctly pyrrhic victory for liberalism. The appeal court's confirmation that prison sentences were proper to this kind of 'offence' evidenced a hardening legal attitude; the (doubtful) ruling that expert evidence would no longer be acceptable upholds the emotional approach to evaluations of obscenity against any attempts at rationalisation, however vain these may be in so subjective an area.

The British Board of Film Censors still operates as a self-regulating body to protect the industry from other criticism, other censorship; and of its nature is less inclined to judge on definitive moral grounds than to attempt to reflect a supposed 'community standard'—which is inevitably a majority standard, with all that implies. In a recent article in *SIGHT AND SOUND* I suggested the

extent to which the Trevelyan era of progressive liberalisation of film censorship was rarely a result of the Board's spontaneous urge, but was at every point conditioned by—was in the wake of, even—current social climates. Stephen Murphy has arrived in office at a critical juncture, when the tide of permissiveness may have turned; and it will not necessarily reflect his own temperament if the BBFC now comes to seem more restrictive. So far the actual figures have not reflected any tightening up:

Year	Films submitted to the Board	'X' Certificates	Rejected
1970	500	212 (98 cut)	23
1971 (to Oct. 31)	396	184 (90 cut)	17

(These statistics must be read as reflecting the rapid increase in the outspokenness of films submitted to the Board. 'We had hoped that putting up the 'X' certificate age limit to 18 would make it possible to reject or cut less; but the films have got tougher,' says Mr. Murphy.)

Yet the *Trash* decision is an unnerving portent. Here is a film which seems to a majority of those who have seen it one of the most artistically and socially substantial films to have come out of the underground, with far less potentially 'offensive' matter than *Flesh*; and an uncompromisingly moral film to boot. The only apparent reason for the refusal of a certificate was that the film (while attacking hard drugs) 'did not condemn soft drugs'. The GLC, which the BBFC has always welcomed as a local court of appeal, taking some of the onus off themselves, has also refused to license *Trash*.

The way seems clear and the portents favourable, then, for a more restrictive censorship, a less tolerant interpretation of the subjective concept of 'obscenity'. In an essentially kindly and easygoing society like ours, censorship, whatever form it takes, makes persuasive appeals. Of course we all agree that children must be protected; of course we have a responsibility to the weakest member of the community (though if we consistently made a rule of adapting social standards to the youngest and weakest we might find ourselves in a strange state). But once censorship exists there is no clear line of demarcation between that which is protective and that which is repressive. I may not like *The Devils*, but I would defend to the death Ken Russell's right to make it and have it shown, and Mrs. Whitehouse's and my right to see it, and if we will to hate.

This essay has wandered I find a tortuous path to bring it from sexual libertarianism in Amsterdam to the perils of the backlash here at home; though I believe the two phenomena are mutually illuminating. It has considered only the theme of sexuality, which is perhaps the least important and most discussed aspect of obscenity. It leaves aside such matters as the obscenity of violence, which is clearly much more perilous, because more attritive and less easily identified. The considerations remain the same: we have always to be watchful that we do not forfeit freedom for want of paying the price and running the risks that it involves; that we do not neglect to watch our watchdogs. ■

LONDON FESTIVAL 71



Philip Trevelyan's 'The Moon and the Sledgehammer'

Forty-five films from twenty countries in the 1971 London Festival. Quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality, and inevitably there was some dead wood, not all of it in the innovatory new directors section. But as usual there were confirmations (Olmi, Bresson, Oshima, Jancsó) and revelations (Monte Hellman, Zanussi's *Family Life*, the astonishing *Days of Water* from Cuba) as well as disappointments. The films we have chosen to review are necessarily only a selection. Many of the films have been reviewed from European festivals; a few have already opened in London and are reviewed elsewhere in this issue; others are due to open and will be reviewed when they do. (Oshima's *The Ceremony*, for one, will need a closer look outside the rather claustrophobic atmosphere of a festival.)

With more films than ever jostling for attention, it ought to have been easier to detect emergent international trends. In fact, the one certainty revealed by the 1971 festival is that trend-spotting is yesterday's game. If there were any discernible pointers, they only confirmed what we already know: that there is an increasingly uncompromising political commitment abroad in the cinema, and that the vanguard of this movement is in the films of the Third World. In general, though, diversification was the

keynote. As Godard observed in *Vent d'Est*, the cinema is at the crossroads; many filmmakers seem to be going their own way, often without the benefit of other people's maps. Which is as it should be.

Paul Morrissey/Trash

At first sight *Trash* is unmistakably a very good film; reseen, it has sections at least when it looks like a great film. What it takes on along the way is subtlety and density; far from being improvisatory and hit-or-miss, like most of the films by the Warhol group, it proves on examination to be, like *Flesh*, very tightly plotted, scrupulously constructed to make even the smallest passing comment pull its weight in the overall dramatic argument. In this the two films are defiantly the work of Paul Morrissey, who emerges in them from a period of anonymity as general cinematic odd-job man of the Warhol factory to make films which are not only highly personal but in several vital respects the antithesis of Warhol's theorising about the *gratuit*, impersonality in filmmaking, and the beyond boredom principle.

The true subject of *Trash* is presented neatly, as a sort of formal statement of theme, in the opening sequence, during

which Geri Miller (the girl who was considering having her breasts inflated with silicone in *Flesh*, and has now apparently done so) tries everything she can think of to excite Joe Dallesandro, who remains resolutely, and not too concernedly, as unaroused by her manipulation as by her elaborate go-go dance. Geri is worried in an almost maternal fashion about Joe; the trouble, she says, is the drugs he takes. Why can't he trip on sex instead: it's cheaper, nicer and a lot healthier. Can you trip on sex? asks Joe. Of course, says Geri; isn't it great when you come? No, says Joe; it's over.

The comment resounds through the rest of the film, one way and another. Behind practically everything that happens and is said there is a quiet, almost suppressed anguish over the evanescence of experience, the search for something that lasts, and the retreat, most evidently in Joe's case, into drugs as a deadener, as something which, in removing the desire for everything more lasting than the next fix, removes also any capacity, physical or mental, to do or experience anything else. (In this respect, incidentally, the film should be, from the censors' point of view, one of the most evidently moral and improving on the subject of drugs; and their arguments for refusing it a certificate, based almost



Jancsó landscape in 'Agnus Dei'

entirely on its drug aspects, seem more than usually ludicrous, indeed totally incomprehensible.)

In each of the major sequences of the film the themes stated at the opening are restated with variations. In all of them the basic situation is that characteristic preoccupation of the Warhol group, first clearly presented in *My Hustler*, the way that apparent communication often shows itself when examined to be merely the bouncing of one's own feelings off someone else who happens to be around at the time. In this case, because of his complete impotence, in every sense of the word, Joe is the sounding-board for other people's fantasies. There is the crazy lady who carries round a bag full of toys and is searching desperately for LSD, which she is against all reason convinced Joe must have concealed somewhere on his person. There is the rich young wife who finds Joe trying half-heartedly to burgle her nearly empty apartment and nurtures hopeless fantasies of rape. There is even the man from the Welfare who does not really connect with anyone else at all, pursuing relentlessly his fantasy of the silver Joan-Crawford shoes and their self-evident suitability for conversion into a chic and unusual lamp.

But above all there is Holly Woodlawn. Holly, needless to say, is one of the Warhol drag queens. And it really is needless to explain: first time round one may be intrigued at the outset by the problem of what exactly she is, but before long one accepts completely that she is what she says she is, a woman. It does not matter what she was born as and may still, for all we know, anatomically be. She is a woman giving a performance, and a performance which is by any standards mesmerizing. Apart from Joe, she is the only recurrent character in the film; he shares a room with her, and is the object of her concern and often exasperated, resentful affection. We see her gathering junk, with and without Joe's assistance, and in a very funny, very sad scene in the first half setting about seducing a high-school lad who is desperately eager to establish his own complete sophistication and has been dumb enough to think he can buy some grass from Holly (which is not what he gets at all).

The character gradually builds, though,

and comes into her own in the final scenes, when her sister's pregnancy gives her the idea that she and Joe will impose on the Welfare as parents-to-be. Unfortunately she comes home one day to find Joe attempting (ineffectually, of course) to ball her sister, and launches into a really great scene of entirely illogical recrimination. After which comes the terribly funny scene with the man from the Welfare, broken up finally when the cushion she has stuffed under her sweater drops out in a moment of mobile fury. She and Joe are left exactly where they were at the start, with no money, no prospects, and no chance of communication even on the most elementary, physical level; yet, for however much or little it may count, with each other.

It is in these final scenes that the point of Morrissey's method really shows itself: they resume and pull together the film and build dizzily to a succession of climaxes, and to the final anti-climax, with complete certainty and economy. In them Joe is, as he has been established, the still, dead centre round which other people's passions revolve, while Holly is the dynamic element. And while what she says and does is often fiercely funny, she does bit by bit acquire her own dignity. Morrissey's treatment of her is masterly. How far what he elicits from her is properly speaking a performance could be argued at length, quite fruitlessly; what we get is what nearly all cinema ultimately is, the physical embodiment of private dreams. And it works here so immaculately because the people are so scrupulously respected in their quite possibly crazy integrity.

Paul Morrissey's is a cinema of complete human acceptance: however odd the characters are, they are never patronised, never made fun of, never presented as material for a quick camp giggle. The angle of regard is the most important thing in *Flesh and Trash*; the fact that the technique is in its own way stunning seems pretty incidental. Indeed, essentially it is incidental—Morrissey belongs to that select band who make films in such a way that the film becomes a transparent envelope, through which we can enter, telepathically, their minds. And the experience is, as they say these days, mind-blowing.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Jancsó/Agnus Dei and La Pacifista

The two Jancsó films in the London Festival are extraordinary. Individually, as it were back to back, they show a single sensibility grappling at full nervous pitch, and in the difficult country of the symbolic and the extreme, with problems of the violent mind, the fanaticism which has short-circuited connections between means and ends. But set the films face to face, and they reflect not mirror images of each other, but the different cultures and landscapes and attitudes of their settings. The Hungarian Jancsó of *Agnus Dei* and the Italianate Jancsó of *La Pacifista*: two minds, one could say, with but a single theme.

Agnus Dei is at once the more familiar (on the surface) and the more deeply inaccessible of the two films. Its setting is that empty, immutable Hungarian plain: a land of sheep-cotes and ranch-like homesteads, with a river flowing by. As in *The Red and the White*, this particular corner of the plain is occupied in turn by rival forces, horsemen of another political colour riding into shot to hunt down the troops seemingly in possession. And as in *Confrontation*, Jancsó uses songs, dances, banners, the movement across the screen of the victors and the betrayed, to motivate the choreography of his direction. The camera endlessly tracks and circles, in the longest of Jancsó's long takes: it would be fascinating, one feels, to see aerial photographs of the sad Jancsó plain, with the patterns and contours of the camera movements traced across them.

The first shot is of a naked girl leading a horse out of the river. Already, one might think, it is almost too quintessentially Jancsó. The girl pulls on her clothes and is revealed as a member of the Red forces (the year is 1919, when Horthy defeated the short-lived Republic of Councils). Briefly, the Reds are on top, in that oscillating pattern of forces. They have taken among their prisoners an epileptic priest, a man harried by violence, a dangerous dreamer of lurid scriptural texts. The Red officer shoots himself (one supposes) offscreen, recognising the inevitability of defeat, and a boy trooper is left to be shot down in his tracks by the rival force. Men run with smoke torches, and the open plain and orchard blur in a fog of apprehension and mystification. Jancsó, one realises, is not repeating himself, and this is not the mental landscape of *The Red and the White*. He is going further; restaging, as the Hungarian critic László Nagy suggests, a kind of timeless mystery, a study of the continuity of unreason after the form of a miracle play.

Specifically, Jancsó links fanaticism with epilepsy—with the reality or the faking, at least, of hysterical possession. The 'good' priest wears the rosette of the Red forces on his cassock, and is shot down in a final confrontation with the church more than militant; the epileptic priest, who follows each attack with a sudden (presumably purging?) dash for the clean and flowing water, passes on his power and his sickness to a smiling young soldier (Daniel Olbrychski). From the dispassionate exchange of cruelties—the implacable assassinations, the strippings and kneelings, the extraordinary scene of a burial among the haystacks—the film passes through

the dancing celebration of a white, religious victory into the oppressive and mysterious country where Olbrychski, a demonic, grinning Pied Piper with a violin, leads his flock into a wilderness of graves, funeral fires, the smoke of unreason.

'This tormenting, heavy, repulsively eccentric film . . . at first sight . . . ' writes Nagy. The total lucidity, dispassion and objectivity of the shooting style neither masks the torments nor elucidates the mysteries. And *Agnus Dei* seems to me a work at once hermetic and dauntingly difficult; its allusions drawn from Hungarian history and from Catholic ritual, the secrets of its power guarded, its baffling details fretting at the mind. For Jancsó, as for other mesmerising directors, the essence is that the spell must be total: there should be no rule outside the film to which one can apply, no laws but those which the characters unhesitatingly obey. I respect *Agnus Dei*, and until the arrival of Olbrychski I think I follow it; from that point on, the inadmissible questions take over.

La Pacifista enters another world: the world of admitted doubts and questions. Monica Vitti plays an enquiring TV journalist, a frightened, thinking reed, bending and swaying in a city of mysterious and hostile forces. Student crowds run through the streets, mindlessly chanting; a small group of fanatical extremists, reactionaries of violence, trouble her days and nights; the police stand by, bureaucratic and faceless men. The effect is not merely that Jancsó has made a film in Italy with Monica Vitti. It is as though, like so many of us, he had been haunted by that apocalyptic last sequence of *The Eclipse*, had added the effects of almost a decade of extremism and violence, and come out on the far side with this film: Antonioni through his looking glass.

In the confined spaces of the city, amid the columns and arcades and behind the Japanese blinds of the heroine's little bungalow, echoing with the traffic of the street, the Jancsó style changes. The sinuous long takes belong on the open plain; here we are focused on the nervous sensibility of an actress, and the trace elements of Antonioni, always present in Jancsó's style, become dominant. (The cameraman, incidentally, is Carlo Di Palma.) There are echoes, which must be entirely deliberate, of both *The Eclipse* and *Red Desert*—not pastiche Antonioni, but a powerful and fascinating transfusion. And there are no less striking overlaps with *Agnus Dei*: the link of epilepsy with cold fanatical violence (in the person of the same actor, Olbrychski), and the appearance at the end of a running figure with another smoke-torch.

La Pacifista, like *Agnus Dei*, is a perplexed film, sprinkled with clues and puzzles and unanswered questions. (A red rose, a naked girl in a shop-window . . .) The mysterious stranger (Pierre Clementi, the inescapable actor for this role) appears to take brief possession of the girl's life; and to play Russian roulette for his own before being dispatched by the blank Jancsó bullet. The impersonal, ritual violence of the Hungarian plain is here the swift karate chop to the back of the neck in the unconcerned street. At the end, abandoned by the police and with the students chanting at the gate, the pacifist heroine finds herself in a quiet medieval courtyard, shooting to kill. A final

quotation comes up like thunder (or Godard) 'My liberty is that of others'. In these two worried, worrying films, Jancsó is sounding the most deep-running threats to that liberty, not only as a Hungarian artist but as a European.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Walerian Borowczyk/Blanche

Perhaps, given the astonishing lack of comprehension which greeted *Goto* in this country—and seems likely to exile *Blanche* for ever after the Festival—both films should always be preceded by a screening of *Diptych*, the short which is virtually a primer to Borowczyk's method. It is composed of two sequences: one in dull monochrome, an intimation of desiccation and decay as we watch a peasant, unmarried, unintelligible, nearly a hundred years old, dodder slowly about his daily routine; the other in full, rapturous colour, a vision of exquisite but inhuman beauty comprising vases of flowers, a kitten playing with a ball of wool.

The two panels are entirely separate, but they are only the visible tip of the iceberg. Underneath, mysteriously connecting the two and heralded by an aria from Massenet, is a great block of passion casting its mantle of regret over a world in which humanity and beauty are destined never to meet, never to shade each other's extremes to create what would be a harmony of the spheres.

The application to *Goto* is obvious, since its characters, born to a world of bleak cruelty, scurry about their sordid business, reaching out like blind insects after an impossible dream of beauty, and dying trapped in the grey mire of their lives. Borowczyk studies them with the clinical interest of an entomologist—literally, since he pins them against walls, windows, spyholes and doorways like so many drawing-boards—but never with the amused detachment of a Buñuel. Pulling them apart to see what makes them go on living, he discovers with tender amazement this persistent,

hopeless quest for a chimera. And when the Handel organ music pours over the tragic finale, weeping for the dead and mourning the living but also alive with hope, the voice is Borowczyk's, in a love begotten by despair upon impossibility.

Blanche is a variation on the theme with two important differences: the diptych is now a single panel comprising both the mire and the beauty, the despair and the impossibility; and it is set far back in time from what has hitherto been Borowczyk's favourite period, an indeterminate turn-of-the-century world of faded daguerrotypes and distant memories. We are now in a glacial 13th century, remote from all echoes of nostalgia and where even the music cascades coolly over the tragedy with a nonchalance far removed from Handel's proud celebration. And yet the same emotional miracle occurs. The girl may be a wilting ninny, her husband a foolish old bore, her lover a handsome tailor's dummy, and the King and Page (who provoke the old man's suspicions and terrible revenge merely to satisfy an idle moment) little more than an old lecher and a prancing peacock, but each of them transcends himself in the face of tragedy—to die well, to serve the cause of innocence or of justice, each according to his light. And one is left, cruelties and stupidities forgotten, with a troubadour's song as pure and awe-inspiring as Bérroul's *Roman de Tristan et Iseut*.

Partly this is because Borowczyk again approaches his subject as an entomologist, first viewing his castle as a forbidding mass looming in a dark forest of green, then breaking it down into a warren of slits and hatchways, low portals and bolt-holes, each framing a watching or spying face. At the beginning of the film one rarely seems to see a full face or figure, sometimes because Borowczyk masks them in frames of masonry, sometimes because he deliberately suspends our vision, as in *Blanche*'s first appearance at the ball (in effect her first appearance in the film), when we see her framed tightly in a low archway as though coyly hovering, then (another shot, of her feet) realise that her

Ligia Branice in 'Blanche'



path is blocked by a huge dog. The two-part shot is not tautological. It establishes two aspects of Blanche's nature, coy flirtation and innocent timidity, neither of them her essential self but each contributing to the tragic misunderstanding; it is also, given the strange alliance between humans and animals in Borowczyk films, a tacit warning by the dog not to enter; and it is the first intimation that each of these segments, these detached fragments of the castle, is a cage in which the characters are isolated as securely as the page walled up in Blanche's room. And in these cages, created by their own blind follies, the characters flutter helplessly, unable to reveal their true selves until it is too late.

More particularly, though, it is because the drawing-boards of *Goto* have become the leaves of an illuminated manuscript, painted in delicate shadings of gold leaf and pale russets, browns, greens. The ugly posturing of the characters, set amid the achingly beautiful forests, and the Gothic mysteries of the castle which suddenly turn dark with horsemen as the final treachery is discovered, reveals the same dichotomy as *Diptych*; and leaves one with the same despairing regret for what might have been.

TOM MILNE

Manuel Octavio Gomez/ Days of Water

Superman meets the Virgin Mary in *Days of Water*, and both are shot down by the guns of revolution. With them fall Disneyland and Coca Cola, the political demagogue and the commercial charlatan, the decadence of the few and the disillusionment of the masses, all swept aside in a cathartic frenzy of destruction. In the orgiastic climax of this astonishing Cuban film, the blood of politics mingles with the red of a rose which a dying peasant saint clutches to her breast; religion and capitalism, twin bastions of centuries of exploitation, die together as the screen fills with red.

Days of Water is a carnival, and as befits a carnival the finale stops the show. But long before the end, the eye has been dazzled by the spectacle, the sideshows as well as the big parade. Like the films of Glauber Rocha, this Cuban extravaganza shows the way to revolution in terms of mass culture. The violence of political upheaval on this scale is implicit in the heritage of black African ritual and Spanish Catholic ceremonial from which Cuban popular art takes its roots. And in the process the faded cardboard totems (and in the film they are just that) of an alien, North American culture are obliterated. What remains is all that is vital from a legacy almost destroyed by the corrosive influence of Church and State. It is an act of purification, an exorcism of black god and white devil performed not with water but with blood.

The metaphor is implied by the way Manuel Octavio Gomez (*La Primera Carga al Machete*) has structured his film round the character of a peasant miracle worker whose own act of purification is to sprinkle water on the heads of the sick. The film begins in 1936 with a journalistic inquiry (appropriately, since the character is based on a documented case of a visionary healer) into a woman, Antonia Izquierdo, who claims the power of healing after a visitation from the Virgin. The journalist

is sceptical but impressed by Antonia's uncorrupted innocence; and this is his role throughout the film, an uncommitted commentator on the sidelines. The history of this peasant saint is also the history of pre-revolutionary Cuba, presented as a collage of fact and fantasy which incorporates—with an imaginative force which frequently takes the breath away—both the style and the content of Cuban popular art.

Antonia's healing water unleashes a flood tide of irrationalism. Peasants flock to her shrine, and the more phoney her miracles the more fanatic their belief in her as an incarnation of divine will. Inexorably, fanaticism breeds exploitation; private and public opportunism batten off her innocence as Antonia's sanctuary is turned into a circus. A title announces the gospel according to Toni, and there follows a celebration of Antonia's vision conjured up by this commercial charlatan like some magical hybrid of folklore and Hollywood camp. Antonia descends from a forest Heaven of gaudy tinsel to dispense her manna to a mid-summer night's dream of Bacchic revellers, an inferno of the sick and the sinners. The fantasy, it turns out, is not far removed from the fact, as gibbering peasants surge round Antonia and her shrine burgeons with the tawdry paraphernalia of religious hysteria. The hysteria of the people is soon matched by the mania of the State, which sees in this woman touched by grace a dangerous magnet of discontent. She is publicly denounced, in a speech of paranoid invective; and privately reviled, by a chemist who harangues the press from behind lifesize cardboard ads for patent medicines.

The style here arises out of the content. The camera, often hand-held, swoops and zooms and snakes through the crowds with frenetic abandon; the gaudy carnival of Antonia's ritual is echoed by the manifestations of a sanctioned religious excess,

church interiors bathed in sickly coloured spotlights as priests take the pulpit to pillory this subversive popular threat to their decadent establishment. The precarious balance of primitive ritual and Catholic pageant is succinctly illustrated in a head-on processional clash of African drums and Christian effigies. And the disintegrating marriage of Church and State is devastatingly exposed in the progressively frantic style which Gomez uses to describe Antonia's exploitation in the political arena.

The State frames Antonia on a murder charge; she is to be sacrificed on the crumbling altar of morality. A lawyer sees the political capital to be made out of a martyr, and swoops to power on the wings of mass hysteria. Antonia is now a battered doll manipulated by a cynical puppeteer, a point beautifully made when the journalist interviews the lawyer ('I defend the rights of those who have nothing') and 'My Blue Heaven' grates from a gramophone. Antonia is witness to a political massacre, shot like some Hawaiian gangster movie; and when she refuses to play the game, the political machine destroys her. The peasants who have seen in her the symbol of their own exploitation are slaughtered by an army which is nowhere daunted by Antonia's holy water. Except for the one peasant who sees the light of the future in the carnage of the past, and in the amazing final sequence topples the icons of decadent display.

On a single viewing of this extraordinary film, one can do no more than point up its brilliant surface. Behind that surface lies an imagination which knows how to use cinema as a dynamic expression of popular art; and it has seldom been used to such astonishing effect. A real find, and a revealing pointer to the vitality of Cuban cinema.

DAVID WILSON

Stuart Rosenberg's 'WUSA'



Philip Trevelyan/The Moon and the Sledgehammer

The best way to describe the film is to describe the maker. Philip Trevelyan is a very large, vague, rather schoolboyish young man (29, actually) with a benign smile and enormous, foursquare potter's hands. Rather difficult to steer around in the street, because he is interested in everything and liable to go rumbling along unstopably, like a runaway pianola. *The Moon and the Sledgehammer* is precisely the sort of film a runaway pianola would make. A bit awkward, a bit gawky, a bit liable to head firmly if erratically off along some attractive byway. But at the same time with an extraordinary certainty of what it wants to do which somehow imposes itself even when, as occasionally happens, one may not quite see what the film is finally up to, or wonder if it is perhaps a trifle self-indulgent because too uncritically wrapped up in its own curious world.

The world is that occupied by a very odd family indeed, somewhere in the woods not far from Newhaven. There is the old father, his two sons and two daughters. They are linked together in the first place simply because they are a family, and have an evidently strong sense of community, of their close-knit familial situation. But beyond that there is a twin preoccupation with machines and with music. We gather

that whatever money they make (and presumably they can get by with very little) comes from servicing and repairing tractors and other heavy agricultural machinery. But also, the men of the family obviously just love machines, with a single-minded, almost sexual passion. The women are rather less involved, and one of the daughters is little in evidence. The other daughter, Kath, is more domesticated, loves her garden, and enjoys playing the various pianos and harmoniums which also lie scattered in the house and outhouses, and for that matter rear up monumentally among the weeds.

It all seems like an idyll—really back to nature, because nature has never been entirely lost, and with none of the less comfortable aspects showing. (How is this life when it rains or snows? What do they do about sanitation and such?) The members of the family talk a little to one another, a lot to the camera. The father does some comic sideshow barking and reminisces about his sea-going days (true or false, who can say?), the sons hold forth about the follies of politics, the necessity of a return to steam in Britain, and the formation of the moon as observable through a home-made telescope. (This last monologue is interrupted by a kitten, skittering wantonly backwards and forwards across the diagram which is being carefully drawn in the earth for our edification.) But all in the garden is not lovely, and little by little the other side of the picture is revealed. The elder son cannot work with his father because he has to have everything his own way, right or wrong; Kath, the more responsible daughter, nurtures dreams of escape as she fantasises while pretending to drive a half-dismantled bus in the woods.

In fact, even when it seems self-indulgent, the film actually wastes nothing. It is far more complex than at first it seems because Philip Trevelyan's response to his human material is far more complex. Clearly he has fallen in love with this family; equally clearly, he has few illusions about them. And the film's style, while often indirect, as the camera dwells lovingly on some detail of a machine in motion, or follows some self-absorbed insect through the wood-shavings or precariously along the moving keys of an outdoor piano, is in its ultimate effect remarkably austere, without any attempt at 'poetry'. Even the colour, subdued, harsh and very English, all grey skies and dangerous pre-Raphaelite greenery, is severely functional. It is impossible to imagine what the director will do next, simply because this film is so utterly unlike anything else one has ever seen. But it can hardly fail to be strange and interesting.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

The Neo-Masochists

'One hour later, you always feel hungry,' or 'The trouble with Chinese restaurants is that you can't tell the waiters apart.' Like Chinese meals, any discussion of film festivals throws up its own set of clichés: on the one hand, so the argument runs, their exhausting practice of showing the maximum number of films in the shortest possible time leaves the conscientious spectator no pause for reflection and tends to obscure all but the most idiosyncratic merits of individual films; on the other, this same concentration enables the



Manuel Octavio Gomez' 'Days of Water'

spectator to observe the emergence of trends and movements which, given a release system that is both haphazard and indifferent to chronology, might otherwise escape his attention. Certainly, the American films on display at the 1971 London Festival reinforce the arguments on both sides: though individually none of them seems to deserve its place in a showcase of the year's best films, collectively they clearly confirm the breaking of the Newest Wave, already randomly signalled in *Medium Cool*, *Easy Rider*, *Five Easy Pieces*, and even *The Seven Minutes*.

As a movement, American Neo-Masochism is held together by considerations of content rather than style, which can range from *cinéma-vérité* documentary to split-screen narrative, with wide-angle long-shots of empty landscapes as the only visual factor in common. Its key themes are Alienation, the Death Wish, the Isolation of Urban Man, the opposition of Men and Machines, the Atrophy of Feeling, the Growth of Violence, and the General Nastiness of Human Nature. These themes have for centuries been providing artists with a source of lamentation, but what distinguishes them here is that they are treated as exclusively American rather than universal, and thus as political or pop-sociological problems rather than as philosophical ones. The films' immediate terms of reference are the Vietnam War and, closer to home, race riots, student agitations, political assassinations and the Manson killings. Unusually bashful in alluding directly to these events, they compensate for this by promoting their characters to archetypes and their characters' possessions to symbols. Their ostensible subject is often no more than a perfunctory springboard for a portentous allegory of American Man, for whom they hold out no hope of survival. Savage in their wholesale indictments, they offer no glimpse of an alternative, constructive course, but instead fiddle angrily with the focus as America's empire burns.

Peter Fonda's first feature, *The Hired Hand* (Paramount), involves a pair of dis-

placed trail-hands (Fonda and the now ubiquitous Warren Oates) meandering on horseback across the Southwest in what gradually emerges as a historical, slow-motion version of *Easy Rider*. Here again, there is a certain tension between the senseless destruction that the characters' escapism involves and the generous dignity of the American landscape, which Fonda endeavours—through a series of irritating superimpositions, reflection shots, dramatic silhouettes and shots into the sun—to render at once lyrical and epic. Perhaps in over-literal response to critics unwise enough to describe *Easy Rider* as a modern Odyssey, the film's central incident involves Fonda's discovery that the wife he deserted seven years ago has indeed been unfaithful to him, while some conspicuous stigmata (sustained in gunfights) and an over-emphatic funeral reading from the New Testament suggest aspirations to the status of Christ as well as Ulysses. The character's neglect of wife and family is justified as part of youth's inevitable wanderlust; and his death at the hands of the sadistic killer whose feet he has maimed assumes the proportion of a religious martyrdom. The violence of the past must be paid for, but in the Gospel according to P. Fonda, the young people—violent and irresponsible though they may be—should not be held to blame.

A somewhat superior odyssey is Monte Hellman's *Two Lane Blacktop* (Rank), with pop musicians James Taylor and Dennis Wilson as a pair of compulsive drag-racers, cruising the minor highways in a souped-up '55 Chevrolet and eventually challenging the driver of a custom-built GTO (Warren Oates again) to a race from New Mexico to Washington D.C. Laying their chassis on the line, they stake their cars on the wager, though it gradually becomes clear that the real prize is the girl hitch-hiker whom they've acquired en route and who proves as incapable of relationships as the rest of them.

An Interview with
Bernard Herrmann

The Colour of the Music



Ted Gilling

Hugo Friedhofer has said that any composer who comes to film hoping to find a vehicle for complete expression is doomed to disappointment. Is he right?

No one person has complete expression because film is a mosaic art, and if you work in films, you have to partake of a community expression. I have worked for some of the most impressive directors of the twentieth century, and until recent times when the new young blades came along, they never heard the phrase 'complete expression'. I never felt that I was being constricted or walked on or made to conform in any manner. I think that people who say that they were simply didn't have the aptitude for writing film music or music of a dramatic nature, though they may be marvellous composers without this ability.

I don't think you condemn a composer because he's not a symphonist. Puccini could only write operas; Brahms never did. I don't know any good composer who felt he was being degraded by writing for films. I agree with Vaughan Williams. He said, 'If you can't learn how to write an interesting piece of thirty seconds duration, there's something wrong with you, not the film.' Some of Chopin's marvellous Preludes don't even last thirty seconds. If you have such a precious talent that it can't take any boundaries or rigid discipline, there's something lacking. Even Bach had to write for a village choir every Sunday. Handel wrote for the greatest singers of his time. But it's luck. It's where you happen to be at the time.

Where did you happen to be?

I learned to become a film composer by doing two or three thousand radio dramas. I worked in radio for fifteen years, and even as recently as four or five years ago I scored a great radio adaptation of Huxley's *Brave New World* at CBS, using six musicians. And about seven or eight years ago I did a series for CBS called 'Crime Classics' for which I'd use three men at the most. Each week was different. Radio was the greatest place to train one's dramatic sense, but I feel that for a composer to be a dramatist is something you either have or you haven't. The ability to write a tune or sell records has nothing to do with it.

Could you be musically original or were you just another sound effect?

I'd say even more original than in films.

I remember doing Archibald MacLeish's *Fall of the City* with Irving Reis, and the original 'Suspense' radio series with William Spier and Bill Robson. There was the 'Corwin Presents' (Norman Corwin) series and the Welles Mercury Theatre of the Air. For years I wrote piles of music every week for *The March of Time*. I was musical director of the Columbia Workshop and in charge of a suspense programme called 'Lights Out' . . . I did so many I forget them all now.

There was a lot of television too, but today you aren't supposed to need any of these preparations or apprenticeships. You just go and play a cocktail piano and you get the biggest pictures available.

Many of your best film scores blend both manic rhythms and moody, elegiac

sequences, frequently in the minor key. Have you deliberately sought out this kind of material?

No, I don't seek it out—they seek me out. In California, they like to pigeonhole you. From the time I began working for Hitchcock, they decided I was a big suspense man. On other occasions, I've had fantasies or bittersweet romantic stories. I think I'd enjoy writing a good comedy score, but I've never had the luck to be offered such films. The nearest I got to it was Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, and perhaps *North by Northwest*. I have no particular theories about keys or modes I work in. The stories are nostalgic or wistful or full of inner contemplation. Mancini gets the cheerful ones. So that's how it is.

In general, where have you had the greatest opportunities to experiment?

Citizen Kane was completely different from any other film ever made, and the score, like the film, works like a jigsaw. For William Dieterle's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, I used a mixture of the rustic barnyard style of music and a very advanced electronic kind of music. When the devil plays at the barn dance, we superimposed for the first time four violin tracks on top of each other. That wasn't repeated for the commercial recording because you have to see the visual to get the impact of it. And we had another effect which we got from recording the sound of singing telephone wires at 4 a.m. It was always used whenever the devil (Walter Huston) appears.

The film with the most experimental, avant-garde techniques was the picture I did for Robert Wise, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). At that time, we had no electronic sound, but the score had many electronic features which haven't become antiquated at all: electric violin, electric

'She might have been going to the supermarket. . .'
Janet Leigh in 'Psycho'



'...The colour of the music was like her character.'
Ida Lupino in 'On Dangerous Ground'



bass, two high and low electric theremins, four pianos, four harps and a very strange section of about 30-odd brass. Alfred Newman said the only thing we needed was an electric hot water bottle, which he supplied.

Were there any other unusual combinations of instruments which you were the first to use?

I think the most important was in *Psycho*, because it was the return to pure ice water. It was written for a purely string orchestra. The strange thing was the number of colleagues and informed members of the public who have written me letters asking what instruments I used. They couldn't recognise the sound of a string orchestra—the same kind of orchestra which plays the music of Mozart and Haydn.

Wasn't your work on *The Birds* a musical innovation?

It wasn't music at all. Remi Gassmann, a composer of electronic, avant-garde music, devised a form of sound effects. I just worked with him simply on matching it with Hitchcock, but there was no attempt to create a score by electronic means. We developed the noise of birds electronically because it wasn't possible to get a thousand birds to make that sound. I guess you could if you went to Africa and waited for the proper day.

You once said that music is called upon to supplement what the technicians have done, and mostly what they have been unable to do.

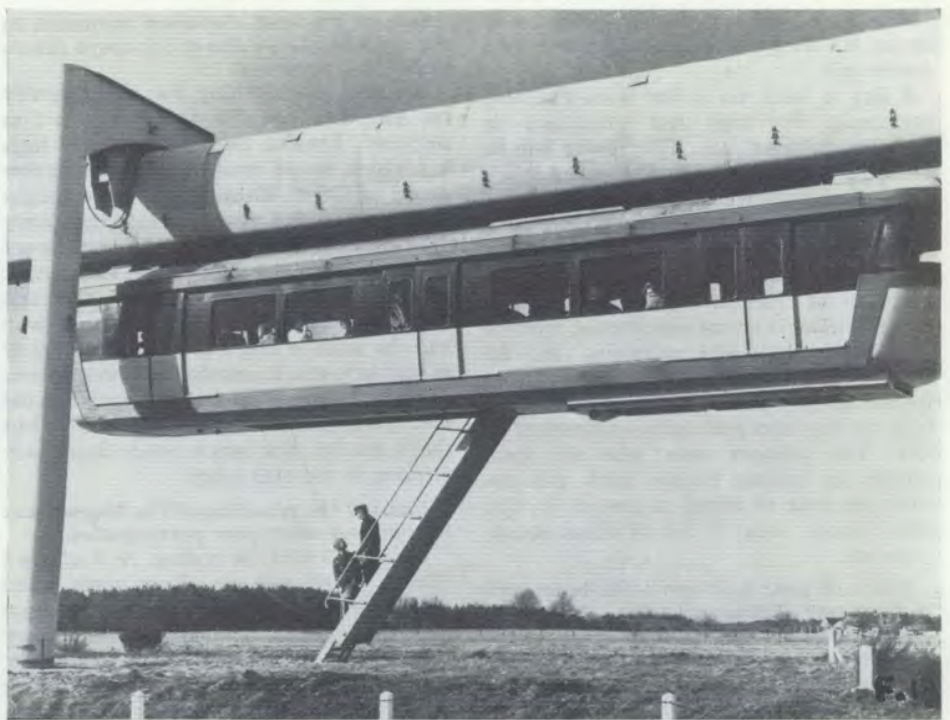
The real reason for music is that a piece of film, by its nature, lacks a certain ability to convey emotional overtones. Many times in many films, dialogue may not give a clue to the feelings of a character. It's the music or the lighting or camera movement. When a film is well made, the music's function is to fuse a piece of film so that it has an inevitable beginning and end. When you cut a piece of film you can do it perhaps a dozen ways, but once you put music to it, that becomes the absolutely final way. Until recently, it was never considered a virtue for an audience to be aware of the cunning of the camera and the art of making seamless cuts. It was like a wonderful piece of tailoring; you didn't see the stitches. But today all that has changed, and any mechanical or technical failure or ineptitude is considered 'with it'.

Music essentially provides an unconscious series of anchors for the viewer. It isn't always apparent and you don't have to know, but it serves its function. I think Cocteau said that a good film score should create the feeling that one is not aware whether the music is making the film go forward or whether the film is pushing the music forward.

Is the composer, in a sense, an actor with a greater range of 'voices off'?

I always think that film music expresses what the actor can't show or tell. For example, when Janet Leigh is driving her car in *Psycho*, all we see is a pleasant young girl driving in the rain with the windscreen wipers going back and forth. From what you see, she might have been going to the supermarket or visiting a friend, but it's the music that tells you that she has embarked on a very dangerous, horrifying experience.

In the very opening of *Citizen Kane*, the music really tells you what 'Rosebud' is.



'Fahrenheit 451': '... the music of the twenty-first century'

When Kane is dying, all the musical motifs and atmospheres of his childhood are presented and the search for 'Rosebud' has really been told to the audience right away. At the end of the film, before the camera discovers the sled, the theme is given out again. And of course it also recurs at key moments of conversation between Kane and all the leading characters.

George Antheil has said that the overture or main titles sequence is the one area where strictly musical form should dominate. Do you agree?

It totally depends on what kind of film it is. I've done main titles that have no relationship to the music which follows. I don't believe that the leitmotif is the only way of writing a film score, because I think you can do it using the operatic principles of Verdi where each number is separate and not derived from the others. They are only derived from the emotional content or the decorative effects of a given moment. The main title music in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is never repeated in the film, but it's related because it presents the turmoil of the leading character (Gregory Peck). The idea was that in the film, we had different resolutions of his problems. So you can say that while the prelude presents the problems, other material has to evoke their solution.

Ideally, should film music be able to stand on its own away from the original material, or is it, as Malcolm Arnold says, a hybrid form of applied art?

I don't think there are any laws. Sometimes you have a chance to write a piece of music that would stand up on its own; other times, you only have opportunities that are effective in the film itself. The public seem to remember the music if they remember the film. I don't really know of a piece of music that's had a life away from a poor film. Whatever it is, the film has had a certain life itself and the music goes with it. People don't listen to *The Third Man* theme as a piece of music; they relate it to the film.

I think film music is a strange kind of masquerading form of art.

I remember I did a score for *On Dangerous Ground* (1950) which John Houseman produced and Nicholas Ray directed. Robert Ryan starred with Ida Lupino, who played a blind girl. In it I used a viola d'amore because I felt that the instrument has a veiled quality. It's a very good film; it's still occasionally shown and I'm always very partial to it because I always felt that the colour of the music was like her character. I wouldn't say that it was a piece you should hear in the concert hall, but with the film, it really worked.

Why do you say that it's a great mistake to use the symphony orchestra, as such, in film scoring?

Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the symphony orchestra has always been an agreed body of men performing a repertoire of music. But since a film score is only written for one performance, I could never see the logic in making a rule of the standard symphony orchestra. A film score can be made up of different fantastic groupings of instruments, as I've done throughout my entire career. But I did use the 120-piece London Philharmonic Orchestra for *The Battle of Neretva*, which I scored two years ago. It's a big epic with a documentary flavour, and a lot of mass movement. There, it's better to use a symphony orchestra. It was made in Yugoslavia as a homage to Tito, but the version I did (which will be seen in the West) is not really that. It's a very impressive film: I enjoyed it.

Do you have a typical working method, once the assignment is set?

The first step is to get inside the drama. If you can't, you shouldn't be writing the music. I like to start at five in the morning and work till ten and that's it. You generally have four to five weeks to write an hour of music and they don't give you enough time to revise. It's better to trust your own instinct, which is generally better than your

brains. Give me a man who is instinctive in his art. It's always superior to the intellectual double talk.

I like to work on a film from the very beginning, but very few producers or directors think of that. They bring you in when the picture is near its final cut and they want you to do it within a very short time—always the least amount of time in which you can possibly do it. *Endless Night*, which I've been working on, is an exception. It's based on one of Agatha Christie's thrillers. Sidney Gilliat is a very experienced director who understands the problems, and he asked me to talk with him and consider what we should do musically at an early stage. I find that the older generation of directors do this. The younger ones who are great experts on making bikinis think you can write an hour of music in two days. The film business today is full of bikini manufacturers.

Some of your best work has been with Welles and Hitchcock. Are they particularly sensitive to music?

Nearly all the directors I've worked with had some feelings about the kind of music a picture should have, or if they didn't, the producer might. In the end, I don't think they have definite ideas. The best you can get out of a director is some of his sensitivity about collaborating with a colleague on making a film. Hitchcock, for example, is very anxious for you to tell him when you see a rough cut where you plan to use music, because if you're using music, he'll cut it differently. A scene without dialogue may seem endlessly long by itself, but appears to shorten with the music. *Psycho* has many scenes like this which seemed to take place in a few seconds, yet the sequences are quite long. The opposite happens with the shower murder, which only lasts about ten seconds. People will tell you that it goes on for ever, but it's the intensity of the music which makes it seem so.

You always work with Hitchcock from the beginning, from the time of script. He depends on music and often photographs a scene knowing that music will complete it. If that is the case, he may eliminate dialogue completely. When we worked on *Vertigo*, he said when we came to the famous recognition scene, 'If we're going to have music, we won't have one word of dialogue; we'll just have the camera and you.'

And, not that it's exactly the same, but in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), the audience knows that the murder will happen when the cymbals crash. The whole function of this big concert was to build the audience toward that moment. I could have written a new piece instead of keeping Arthur Benjamin's music, but I didn't think that anybody could better what he'd done in the original version. I'm still very happy that I made that decision.

It's hard to talk about Hitchcock. It was a collaboration which I no longer have for many different reasons—none of them personal. The people who produce his films feel that he should use a kind of pop music and I don't agree with that, so I prefer not to bother. I think that Hitchcock's films depend enormously on music to build his nutcracker of suspense, and to impose on him a kind of pop culture is to deprive him of one of the greatest weapons in his arsenal. However, it's not for me to say . . .

One of the least discussed moments in *Citizen Kane* is the disastrous opera debut. How did that evolve?

We needed something that would terrify the girl and put the audience a bit in suspense. I wrote the aria in a very high key which would make most performances sound strained. Then we got a very light lyric soprano and made her sing this heavy dramatic soprano part with a very heavy orchestration which created the feeling that she was in quicksand. Later on, that aria was sung many times by Eileen Farrell, who had the voice to sing it absolutely accurately in that key, and it sounded very impressive. Some writers have said that the singer in the film performed it deliberately badly, but that's not so. She was a good singer performing in too high a key.

How did the recutting of *The Magnificent Ambersons* affect your participation?

It only affected the ending. As it affected Welles, it affected me. They never asked him to reshoot the ending or me to write new music for it. A composer named Roy Webb wrote the last few minutes of music. They finished *Ambersons* in a totally different style; they didn't even attempt to carry out the textures of Orson Welles. It's said that when Orson's final version was first shown, David Selznick wanted RKO to make a copy for the Museum of Modern Art. But they wouldn't even spend the money to do that. I don't think there is a copy available.

How did Truffaut approach the function of the music scores for *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Bride Wore Black*?

I originally asked him why he wanted me for the *Fahrenheit* music when he knew avant-garde composers like Boulez and Stockhausen. He said, 'Because they'll give me music of the twentieth century. You'll give me the twenty-first.' It sounds like a glib remark, but it wasn't. I felt that the music of the next century would revert to a great lyrical simplicity and that it wouldn't have any truck with all this mechanistic stuff. Their lives would be full of it from morning to night. Their lives would be scrutinised. In their music they would want something of simple nudity, of great elegance and simplicity. So I said, 'If I do your picture, that's the kind of score I want to write—strings, harps and a few percussion instruments. I'm not interested in all this whoopee stuff that goes on being called the music of the future. I think that's the music of the past.'

The Bride Wore Black is Truffaut's homage to Hitchcock, with only one touch that wasn't Hitchcockian—the use of lovers' quarrels. Hitchcock has always been a great observer of the pursuit of lovers, but he rarely goes into their quarrels. I feel that it's a remarkable picture, but it has been mucked around in both English and French versions. You know, Truffaut keeps recutting his films. When I last saw him, he was talking about recutting *Les quatre cents coups*. He feels that a director can continue to go back and recut. He doesn't like to leave a film just as he has finished it, contrary to Orson who says 'That's it' and Hitchcock who never looks at his films again. He runs them for people but he always leaves the room. When it says 'The End', he comes back with a cigar. He says, 'Why do I want to see it? I see all the things that are wrong with it. There's nothing I

can do now.'

The *Egyptian* score which you wrote with Alfred Newman in 1954 was your only collaboration with another composer for a film. Was it difficult?

Newman has never been completely appreciated for his remarkable achievement in films, because he was the first film composer (and maybe in many ways the last) who achieved the highest technical finish and polish of film performance. I think he did a marvellous job on *The Song of Bernadette* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Collaborating with him on *The Egyptian* was a pleasure, and I'm very fond of that score because it embodies many of the things we've been talking about.

No one knows anything about Egyptian music of that period (5000 B.C.), so we had to invent it, and I'm proud of the result. I feel that if they did have music, ours would be something like it. I don't feel this intellectually; I feel it emotionally and I feel it so strongly that I believe that in a way it must be so. Alfred felt that way too.

That score and others like *Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef* and *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* were all done in four-track stereophonic recordings, but all the versions of these films which you see today are monaural pushdowns. To see and hear *The Egyptian* in CinemaScope and colour and stereo sound is a different world altogether. It's a shame in a way that all these wonderful movies end up on the television screen with terrible sound and three-quarters of the picture cut off.

Who wrote what for *The Egyptian*?

Alfred handled all the sequences dealing with Merit (Jean Simmons) and I did all the sequences involving Nefer (Bella Darvi). The rest we wrote together. After all these years, the record we did of it still sells very well. It and *The Robe* and *The Big Country* by Jerome Moross are about the only ones of that vintage still around.

Aside from Newman, are there other composers whom you admire and who have perhaps influenced your work?

One of the finest scores ever written for a film was by the Polish composer Karol Rathaus for a German production of *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1931. I met him many years ago in New York. He lived in Brooklyn and taught at Queen's College. This man was one of the absolute geniuses of film music, but in the last thirty-five years of his life no one ever gave him the opportunity to do any kind of film. *Uncle Silas* was an original and unique film and Alan Rawsthorne's score is a remarkable achievement. He should have done more films.

And I admire the great achievements of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. The most amazing Prokofiev score was for *Ivan the Terrible*, which I think was superior to *Alexander Nevsky*.

There are others who are not mentioned much today, like the remarkable scores of Ralph Vaughan Williams for *49th Parallel* and *The Loves of Joanna Godden*. The late Anthony Collins who worked with Herbert Wilcox did some remarkable work and was able to blend the most formal music with the most hilarious situations. William Walton we all know, but I differ from my colleagues and contemporaries who like his big epic scores. They are marvellous, but I think his most amazing achievement was for

Major Barbara and I remember that and his score for *Escape Me Never* with the most pleasure. Both had more intimate music.

Now that the studio system is all but dead, are you discovering greater freedom in your assignments, both in the style of the material and the mechanics of your own participation?

I always had the greatest artistic freedom when I was working for a studio. The more it became *laissez faire*, the less freedom I had. Today you have a bikini manufacturer or a cigar maker who knows all about everything. All he wants to hear is 'Yes, it's great.' I don't think it's freedom at all. What has happened is that a lot of incompetent people have been able to get work pretending they're artists whereas in the old studio system they wouldn't have got far, because they'd have been assigned to be somebody's assistant and their level of talent would have been quickly discovered. I recently worked on a film with a fellow. He's a nice enough chap and I think he may have seen a thousand movies in his life, yet he hadn't the vaguest idea of how a film was made. He was the director.

Until recently, people had a career in films through creating a body of work with a team of people. Each director or producer had a team within the studio set-up. Today, no matter who you are, you have no continuity of career. You've got a chance to make a film, and unless that makes an exorbitant commercial return, you're finished. Schlesinger said recently, 'If this [*Sunday, Bloody Sunday*] doesn't go, I'm finished.' Why should a man of his talent even *dream* of saying such a thing? Every director is entitled to make bad films. Everybody does sometimes. Even Beethoven had bad music. But not in this thing. You're just as good as you were a second ago.

They are not people who know about aesthetics. When *Psycho* was made, nobody in the front office liked it. They all thought they ought to cut it drastically and sell it as a television show. They only know in music how many records you sell.

What do you see as the future shape of film production, and how will it affect your own work?

I'm very pessimistic. Every three weeks, there's a group of new geniuses. I don't believe that it's possible for civilisation to turn out this amount of talent in three weeks. Talent is the smallest thing about being an artist in anything. You need many years of apprenticeship to develop the craft that goes with being creative—the discipline, the experience. If I were starting to work in films today as a young man, I'd tell them, 'Get lost. You have no need for me. You want everything that sounds like everybody else.' The point of sounding like everybody else is to be safe. We live in a time when everybody is terrified to be on his own. He has to be part of it all. I don't know what 'it' means. Where you can go and see a Western with a rock score? What am I supposed to identify with?

Georges Auric once explained to me very acutely the disadvantage of using pop music dramatically in films. He said, 'The trouble is that all popular songs are based on an eight-bar phrase, so once they start the melody, they've got to finish it. It *has* to last that long.' Ideally, film music should be based on phrases no longer than a second or



'... If they did have music, ours would be something like it'. Bella Darvi in *'The Egyptian'*



'Citizen Kane': '... the feeling that she was in quicksand'

two, but a popular song needs a certain span and this is partly why so many film scores today are disappointing. You go to a pop concert, not a film score. It goes along with the picture; it doesn't go with it. It often has no relationship to the picture. Sometimes the people who write it never see the film. Most music today is no longer used for any purpose except to sell gramophone records. Now you make pictures with the commercial record in mind.

What annoys you most about your profession and what pleases you?

It once demanded from those who worked in it great professional skill, and it saddens me to see that this is no longer needed, in the same way that it's no longer needed to have marvellous people like those who enamelled jewellery in the sixteenth century. The art of writing music for films is close enough to extinction that unless tastes

change very quickly in the next few years, it *will* become extinct, because the new people coming into it simply haven't got the technical knowhow. The art of writing or orchestrating a musical is going to die out too, because today they don't seem to want that kind of pit sound. They want a rock group. Not from me. I'm not saying that rock is wrong. I'm all for anything, but I'm against it when it takes over and becomes common to everything. I don't have to hear the Mozart G minor Symphony with a rock background and I don't like the Mona Lisa with a moustache, but some people evidently do.

But I was lucky enough to work during the golden years of the film industry, when it was dominated by personalities who knew how to put together big films using impressive techniques. It afforded me a great opportunity to express myself.



FIRST PERSON SINGULAR



Joseph McBride

'First Person Singular' was the singularly apt title of Orson Welles' first radio series. Although he signed off each of his programmes with the words 'Obediently Yours', Welles was about as self-effacing as a drunken butler, intruding himself into the plots of everything from *Hamlet* to Commander Edward Ellsberg's *Hell on Ice*. In an original drama he broadcast three days before the first showing of *Citizen Kane*, a fable about Fascism in small-town America entitled *His Honor, The Mayor*, there is a brief scene in which the beleaguered mayor sits down to a hearty breakfast. This prompts a long rumination from Welles beginning, 'Take my word for it, when responsibilities get to be almost unendurable, a man on a diet takes to his sugars and starches as an addict retreats to his opium-pipe, or a drunkard to his bottle . . .' Welles used this interlocutory technique heavily in the early scenes of his radio shows. Only after the issues were thoroughly defined would he withdraw and let his characters work out a solution to the problems he had outlined: 'As I told you, this story hasn't any moral or message of mine tied to it. It's *about* morals and messages though . . .' Of course, the commentary also served simple technical functions, but the way Welles forced the audience's attention on to his own presence in the drama was wholly personal. As a show progressed, his omniscience would begin to seem rather sinister, as if the characters were merely functions of his own thoughts and desires.

Welles' films reflect the influence of radio in their narrated prologues, which often provide a poetic or literal synopsis of the story, and in the director's dual presence as protagonist and commentator. But because of the cinema's heightened complexity, Welles could never more than approximate the confidential intimacy possible in the one-dimensional world of radio. He has said that

he loves 'innocent' forms of entertainment, such as magic, Westerns and the early horror films, because they take the audience back to the beginnings of story-telling . . . back to the bard strumming his lyre and murmuring in the darkness of the cave. This may also explain his nostalgia for radio, which has persisted decades past the death of radio as a dramatic instrument.

In 1958 Welles made a television pilot film, *The Fountain of Youth*, based on John Collier's short story *Youth from Vienna*. It was to inaugurate a series of short story adaptations which he would host, narrate and direct, much like the old 'First Person Singular' series on radio. The second programme was to have been based on Collier's *Green Thoughts*. At the end of the pilot Welles calls it 'A sort of spook story with a seasoning of giggles'; which is also an apt summation of *The Fountain of Youth*. Needless to say, the pilot was considered eccentric, and Welles never found backing for the series. Given a single showing on ABC-TV, *The Fountain of Youth* won a Peabody Award for creative achievement and then disappeared into the oblivion of the vaults, surfacing only briefly during a Welles retrospective at Hollywood's Los Feliz Theatre in 1969.* It remains his only work of television fiction (he has done fairly extensive work in TV documentary), his only 'film conceived for the box', as he recently described it. For the record, his *Don Quixote*, recently completed after sixteen years of intermittent shooting, began production as a television show but gradually grew into a feature; and his *The Immortal Story* was only financially connected with the box—it was made with money from a French television network.

Welles' film audience is missing a revealing experience in not being able to see *The Fountain of Youth*. Its mixture of bold theatrical stylisation, puckish humour and bardic intimacy draws on a side of Welles, the 'radio side', which seldom pokes through the intricate architectonics of his feature film work. *The Immortal Story* is told with a fabulist's simplicity, but it is still a story film conceived for the large screen, with all the pretence of showing real people involved in a real drama. *The Fountain of Youth* is more a chamber play than a drama. Welles is on screen, in Mephistophelean evening dress, longer than any of the putative principals, often stepping in front of the camera while the scene behind him blurs or fades away; he speaks the characters' unspoken thoughts, interprets their motives, warns of impending events, and occasionally even speaks their lines while they move their mouths like puppets. The most nostalgic touch comes at the very end, when Welles signs off, 'Till then, I remain—as always—obediently yours . . .' as the screen darkens around his darkly smiling profile.

But in *The Fountain of Youth* form follows function, for the theme of the piece is narcissism. The Collier story is a whimsical take-off on the Faust theme; it is about an endocrinologist, Humphrey Baxter, who develops an eternal youth potion and uses it to tamper with the affections of a naive young actress, Caroline Coates. Like Collier, Welles relegates the Faust business to a red herring (the potion turns out to be a

* Max Laemmle, manager of the Los Feliz, had to obtain clearance from several trade guilds in order to give it a theatrical showing. Desilu, now a Paramount subsidiary, provided the 35 mm. print, which played for four weeks on a bill with *Chimes at Midnight*.

Above: 'The Fountain of Youth'. Orson Welles, Joi Lansing, Dan Tobin, Rick Jason. Stills by Joseph L. Bridges Jr.

fraud, nothing but water and salt, which the scientist has been using as a kind of truth serum), in order to reduce our metaphysical speculations to a baser, more human, level. Welles had the distinct advantage over Collier of working in a visual medium. None of his films has ever made such extensive use of mirrors, for instance, and the sheer physical data of the characters' faces and bodies (e.g., the pneumatic bliss of watching Joi Lansing waddle through the role of Caroline) speak volumes. In fact, it is problematic who should be considered the protagonist of the tale: Caroline, who has Humphrey in her spell, or Welles himself, who has both of them in *his* spell.

I opt for Welles, on the evidence of one splendidly theatrical moment. It occurs after a gossip columnist burbles into a radio microphone about Caroline and Alan Brodie (Rick Jason), her tennis-player Valentino, and we see a rococo fountain cascading against a lowering sky. Welles begins talking about the legendary fountain of youth and the myth of Narcissus. Suddenly he is before the camera, telling us *sotto voce*, 'It was his own expression he fell for . . . and he fell in.' The camera holds on Welles for a long moment, with vague shadowy forms moving in the studio behind him, as he contemplates that statement with a bemused expression. It's as if he's saying: 'Here's Narcissus, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Orson Welles. You will shortly be watching several varieties of human being fall under the spell of vanity, but don't be smugly superior, for it is your obedient servant who is playing out his obsessions so that you, on the other side of the lens, will see them in yourselves. Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The mirror does . . .'

The early sequences are suffused with that off-handed indulgence toward human weakness which Welles often uses to implicate the audience in the characters' dilemma. The prologue of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, for instance, presents the family's snobbery as charming and captivating (young George snapping his whip at the inviting butt of a street labourer, Isabel curling her nose at Gene Morgan's horrid automobile). The nostalgia Welles shares with his characters is a melancholic glance back at a time of moral innocence. He lets us indulge in the pleasures of irresponsibility before we have to face its consequences. In *The Fountain of Youth*, as in *Ambersons*, he dwells on the romantic quaintness of vanished artifacts and customs to keep us aware of their evanescence. The story is prefaced by a shot of a magic lantern flashing into the camera; the characters are introduced with stills; honky-tonk music on the soundtrack whisks us back to the 1920s. In this context, Humphrey's dabbling with the sources of life seems, at first, an invigorating rebellion against his own encroaching decay, a Lawrentian howl against the stuffiness of the laboratory.

The play in which he spots Caroline is titled *Destiny's Tot*, but destiny is the furthest thing from his mind: what we actually see of the play is Caroline lasciviously posed against a barnyard backdrop to an undertone of orgasmic clapping. Stunned by the spectacle, the scientist removes his social mirror—takes off his glasses—in a gesture which will be echoed

at the end, when he confronts Caroline with the truth about his deception. Humphrey (Dan Tobin) is not the effortlessly passionate young scientist of the Collier story, but a tweedy middle-aged remnant of the Victorian era uncomfortably stranded, like Gene Morgan, amidst the technological brutalities of the new century. Just as Gene's automobile quickly evolves from a romantic fancy into a soul-devouring monster, Humphrey's potion begins as an offshoot of his fascination with Caroline but soon leads to cool talk about how the potion is obtained in an 'extremely delicate operation which unfortunately is fatal to the animal we get it from . . . It's quite a common animal . . . man.' The brittleness of Humphrey's dream is beautifully captured in the fast montage of stills Welles uses to depict the couple's first kiss.

Befitting the medieval (or is it futuristic?) nature of Humphrey's experiments, his laboratory is an eerily unreal chamber with outsize jars and bottles looming behind him like the odd shapes moving behind Welles in the studio/laboratory he inhabits. To clinch the connection, the director has placed one incongruous object in the laboratory—a bulky old-fashioned radio with a giant shell for a speaker. Like other Wellesian Faust figures (Bannister in *The Lady from Shanghai*, Arkadin, Quinlan in *Touch of Evil*, Clay in *The Immortal Story*), Humphrey tests his powers by constructing a fable with living characters. Removed, by his romanticism, from the world of ordinary people, he tries to twist reality to fit the shape of his own ego. The irony in *The Fountain of Youth* is that the man who pulls the strings is also attached to an invisible set of strings. When Humphrey divulges his secret to Caroline and Alan in the laboratory, Welles mocks the 'secret' by supplying the first lines for each character. During the scene the camera moves repeatedly in and out on the vial as it changes hands, giving it an almost palpable power of involuntary attraction. A clock ticks with hallucinatory slowness throughout the scene, and Caroline and Alan exchange glazed, zombie-like looks as Humphrey facetiously 'marries' them by joining their hands around the vial.

'Time, which was the cause of all this trouble, went on . . .' Welles murmurs in one of the subsequent scenes, barely suppressing an unholy smile at the thought of Caroline and Alan examining each other for wrinkles and arguing over who should drink the potion. Caroline is Youth, and youth is impermanence, and what is it that Humphrey wants if not to immortalise the moment? The grotesqueness of an older man, a man of superior intellect, pursuing a young floozie evokes all the destructive illogic of the romantic impulse. Caroline is the *reductio ad absurdum* of romance, all surface and show. Humphrey doesn't want her for herself, but for what she represents. She is a token of everything missing in his life, beginning with sex, which is nothing if not a struggle to escape into a timeless state of perfect irresponsibility. The rub is, of course, that the moment of happiness disappears as soon as consciousness returns to savour it. In Welles' fundamentally romantic viewpoint, women stand for everything a man strives after but cannot possess. Since women symbolise everything which is

greater than man, they are also the source of his destruction. They are beyond reason, beyond morality, beyond responsibility.

The last section of *The Fountain of Youth* is given over to a series of expressionistically lit, ballet-like gestures in which the two youths act out the consequences of Humphrey's narcissism while he, with scientific detachment, disappears from view. Welles fades in on the vial shining unnaturally out of the darkness, harsh electronic sounds hovering in the air. A hand comes out of the void to put the vial on a mantel, and the light rises to reveal both Caroline and Alan gazing into a mirror—the lens of the camera. The effect is profoundly disturbing, for we are watching them but they are watching *us*. They fade away, again leaving the vial shining in the darkness. Soon we see Caroline standing behind Alan as he gazes into the camera. Welles narrates in a hushed voice, 'She watched him in the mirror, and he saw her . . . watching him . . .' Suddenly everything but his hand and the vial plunge into darkness, a *coup de théâtre* which defies verbal description except to say that it is the closest equivalent to a shudder ever put on film.

The world turns into a crazy house (cf. the last reel of *The Lady from Shanghai*) when Alan, succumbing to the temptation of drinking the vial, refills it with water and bitters to let Caroline do the same. The vial on the mantel, seen through the camera/mirror, dissolves to a shot of an actual mirror, which in turn dissolves to a shot of that mirror seen through *another* mirror. The master of ceremonies explains off-screen, 'Now the emptiness of one's own home at midnight can seem like an injury . . .' The emptiness of mirrors reflecting upon themselves with no one, but the audience, looking into them: the emptiness of a mind disintegrating. Our mind.

The next shot, as extraordinary as anything Welles has ever conjured up with his camera, shows Caroline standing in silhouette before a huge mirror. The mirror mocks its function, for it does not reflect anything at all; instead it is filled with a frozen view of her own face, grinning. The mirror is festooned with a garland of thorns. Welles' voice, portentous and rhythmic as the ticking of the clock in Humphrey's laboratory, intones, 'She could feel and almost hear the remorseless erasures of time . . .' as she runs her hands over the mirror. A clock begins ticking, and the face in the glass begins to metamorphose. Like the Picture of Dorian Gray, the mirror reveals the hidden emptiness of death. Layer after layer of luxuriant flesh dissolves relentlessly down to the skull. She screams, cymbals crash, and our mirror, the screen, is engulfed with hers in utter darkness. A still shows Caroline drinking the potion—time has stopped—before Humphrey tells her that it has all been a trick. Maybe I was wrong when I said that *The Fountain of Youth* came out of radio. Maybe it came out of those 'Mercury Wonder Shows' in which Welles, billed as The Great Orsino, sawed blondes in half and made them disappear. It was done with mirrors, remember. ■

The author wishes to thank Arthur Knight for giving him access to The Fountain of Youth.



CURSED BE MY TRIBE

A SECOND LOOK AT THE TOUCH

James Paul Gay

In August 1970, Ingmar Bergman changed the course of his career by announcing that for the first time he would be making a film in English, for an American film company. A further surprise came with the selection of comedian Elliott Gould as the star of this maiden venture.

Aside from Gould, Bergman was working with his regular troupe: Bibi Andersson and Max von Sydow co-star, and the photography is by Sven Nykvist. Nevertheless, from the title sequence onward, *The Touch* looks different from anything else Bergman has ever done. It opened in summer 1971 to generally mediocre Swedish reviews, with most critics commenting on the shallowness of the plot, Bergman's discomfort with the English dialogue, and Gould's laboured acting. In general, the film was dismissed as a minor lapse in a great career (about on the same level as *Now About These Women*), an interlude from which Bergman would recover as soon as his next film was released.

However, far from being dissociated from the main body of his work, *The Touch* explores and develops some of Bergman's oldest and most important themes. What is jarring about the film is not the initial false impression one gets of Bergman shooting off in trivial directions: it is rather the enormous disparity between the thematic development and the deliberately banal style. Bergman's art has been developed through the conflict and ambiguity that he feels toward God and Religion; even if he leaves this preoccupation for a time (as with *Persona* or *The Shame*), he returns to it again as he has done here. *The Touch* is a film about religion. It differs from Bergman's other religious films only in that it is the first to deal explicitly with the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, or more precisely with the threat of Judaism to Christianity.

The memory of the Nazi holocaust has muted the consciousness of this conflict, but to one obsessed, as Bergman is, with the disintegration of the Christian universe, the question cannot be entirely suppressed. Bergman has long had a strange fascination with Judaism. He is given to illustrating his

interviews with old Yiddish stories and Jewish jokes, and his continual re-examination of Christian symbology (especially crucifixion) leads him to Jewish symbols as well. Bergman has touched upon Jewish artifacts before—one thinks of the famous photograph from the Warsaw Ghetto in *Persona*—but recently the Jews seem to have occupied a more prominent place in his thoughts. Last spring, Bergman directed a new play by Lars Forsell, called *Show*, about the Jewish comedian Lenny Bruce. And now with *The Touch* he makes a Jew the central character in his own drama.

The conflict between thematic continuity and stylistic capriciousness is so marked that it effectively misleads the viewer in his appraisal of the film. During the first twenty minutes one is simply tempted to dismiss it as inept. *The Touch*—ostensibly a very simple story about a bitter-sweet love affair between a Swedish doctor's wife and a visiting American archaeologist—is poorly constructed and sketchily drawn. The camera set-ups, the lighting, the editing and most of all the sound are slickly and superficially executed. Close-ups abound of car

headlights being turned off, vacuum cleaners being pushed up to the camera, telephones being racked into focus just as they are about to ring; scenes end by having people walk into the lens, blacking out the screen. There is a montage of Bibi Andersson trying on various dresses before a mirror as she prepares to meet her lover that is reminiscent of Rouben Mamoulian at his worst—not of the creator of *Wild Strawberries* and *The Silence*.

This simply doesn't make sense. One can imagine Bergman stumbling over plot or characterisation (although not to the extent that he does here), but he is after all one of the greatest craftsmen ever to look through a lens. Regardless of anything else, Bergman cannot be charged with incompetence.

Most critics and the public have taken the film at face value—when it opened in Stockholm, one of the Swedish newspaper reviewers called it 'Bergman's Love Story'. I believe that this view misses the point; the film only begins to make sense if one looks behind the obvious plot and the music on the soundtrack. What then remains is Bergman's examination of a special frightened, tortured and confused anti-semitism.

Elliott Gould (David) is an archaeologist who is digging up an old church on the Island of Gotland. Karin (Bibi Andersson) falls in love with David. She is married to a surgeon; her husband (Max von Sydow) is a man of great humanity and warmth. They have two children, both bright, spontaneous and loving. Their life together in an idyllic country house surrounded by gardens is bourgeois, but it is bourgeois at its best: secure, tender, stimulating, and (one is made to feel very strongly) fun. From the moment that David and Karin first encounter one another, in an abrupt



and ugly scene at a hospital right after her mother has died, their relationship is one of strangeness, tension and hostility. It is not at all a question of Gould as a bohemian, violent and unpredictable antithesis to Bibi Andersson's married life. It is rather that Bergman establishes an environment in which there is no motivation for Karin wanting to drink a cup of tea together with David, let alone carry on a passionate affair of two years duration. Their relationship is not that of a woman drawn to a man, but rather of love, security, order and tenderness drawn to its antithesis. This antithesis, in the perspective of the film, seems to be symbolised by David's Judaism.

Bergman makes us see that David is not what he purports to be: a tortured intellectual whose family has been exterminated in the concentration camps (we later find out that this is at least partly a lie: his sister is living in London). David is quite simply nefarious: a non-person whose face shines with the malevolence of a gargoyle, who crouches like a simian and whose gait is that of a brain-injured child. And here I think can be found the answer to a central riddle of the film: why Bergman chose Gould. David is not a character: he is a symbol, or more precisely, an icon. He is a catalyst for the other characters, the propulsive force toward iniquity. For this Bergman broke away from his tradition of ensemble acting and relied instead (much as Eisenstein did) on type-casting. A certain figure was needed to convey David's awful inarticulateness, his blind and random destructiveness. Bergman found this type in an alien actor: it would not do to have a Shylock who bleeds.

Karin and David begin their affair in the church David is excavating—interesting in itself since Bergman imposes religious objects continually throughout the film, and many of the most important shots end with the camera moving away from the actors

and on to a gargoyle or a saint or a Christ. David shows Karin an ancient wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, still partially entombed within the church wall. He shines a flashlight on the statue and we see how similar she looks to Karin. Later on, when David's and Karin's affair is disintegrating, Bergman returns to this church for the central scene in the film. David shows Karin the now fully excavated statue and explains that insect larvae have been discovered lying within the wood. They have lain dormant for five hundred years; now that the statue has been brought to light again the larvae are hatching and eating the Virgin away from within. Aside from the cheapness of this parable, it refers to two parallel things: David's relationship with Karin, and the Jews' relationship to Christianity. The larvae have lain dormant for five hundred years—roughly the time that the Jews of Europe were ghettoised—and now they are beginning their work again. If one posits a universal world order of Christianity, the menace of the Jews to that order becomes obvious: they can neither be assimilated nor exterminated. Like insects, they survive because they hide in dark places, they go where no one is looking and they work from within. The underground (and hence insect-like) existence of Jews within Christian society has been a staple of Jewish literature since Kafka.

When David was making love to Karin, he suddenly began screaming in an incomprehensible language: the English that he spoke in everyday situations was merely a cultural appendage that David affected in order to be able to move among the alien outside world. At the unguarded moment of orgasm, he reverts back to his own unique, incomprehensible and sinister-sounding tongue. David's English is like every other visible characteristic: camouflage. What exists at the core is a man who is not a part of any society, nation, language or

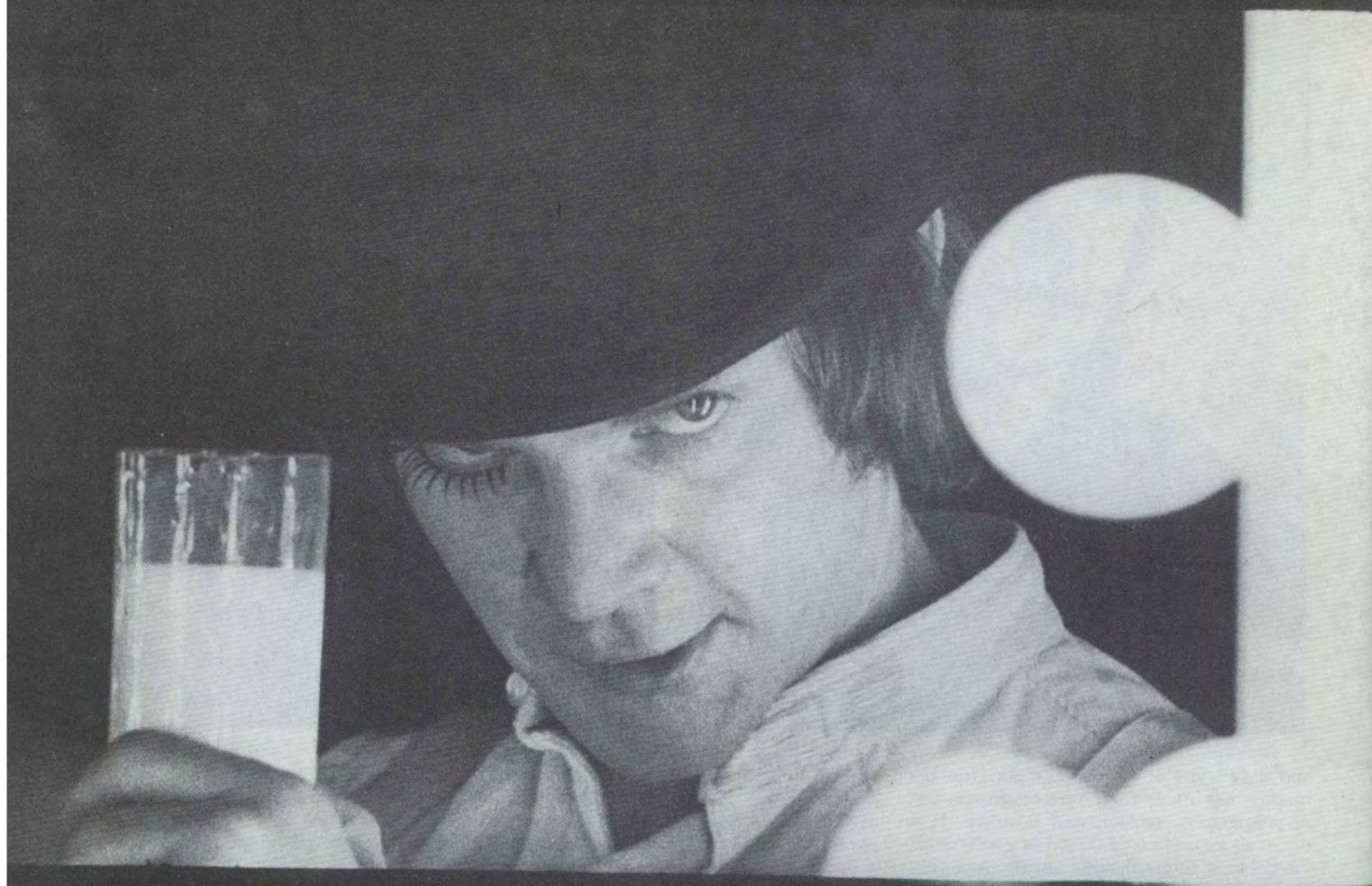
culture except his own.

David materialises from nowhere and he disappears just as suddenly. Karin, distraught, drives her open hand into broken glass, making a stigmata on her palm. She then goes off to London in search of him, even though she knows it means the end of her marriage and life as she had known it. She traces him to his flat and finds not David, but his sister, a deformed woman named Sarah (Sarah was the code name given by the Germans to all Jewish women as part of the identity-stripping process). Who is this woman? Where does she come from? We do not know. Unlike the Swedes of Karin's world, all of whom have a clear place in society and a clear relationship with the people around them, Sarah and David exist in a vacuum.

This historical refusal of the Jews to surrender their identity, to join in a larger chorus of angels, is something that one feels the film sees as frightening. The Jews are without roots; they live in a geographical and historical void and hence, for *The Touch*, perhaps in a type of spiritual void as well.

The horrors of the last generation have tended to institutionalise our thinking about anti-semites (and Jews as well). One's mind is forced immediately to think of the mass rallies, the ghettos, the window smashings and finally, Auschwitz. This has hidden a far older, far more traditional fear of the Jews. The guilt felt about Dachau has served only to mask this fear, to drive it further inward, to sublimate it into other forms. But, like Bergman's insects, it survives in the dark. Bergman has worked within the genre of a simple love story to play out a drama that is far from simple and even farther from love. ■

Left to right above: Ingmar Bergman, Max von Sydow and Bibi Andersson, Sheila Reid (Sarah), Elliott Gould.



KUBRICK'S HORRORSHOW

Philip Strick

That there is a basic incompatibility between clockworks and oranges would seem self-evident enough for reminders to be unnecessary. As writers of speculative fiction have frequent cause to comment, however, human nature is not disposed to accept the obvious. As long as there are oranges, there will be men with bright ideas on how to make them tick—and those with equally bright, if somewhat reactionary, ideas on how to leave them just as they are.

The matter is not, of course, solely one of citrus mechanics: Sophocles was not the first to examine it, nor would Orwell be the last. When Anthony Burgess came to tackle it some ten years ago in his exuberant novel *A Clockwork Orange*, he wisely confined its repetition to a quotation from the work of the hysterical journalist in his story (an insulating device of which Nabokov would undoubtedly have approved): 'The attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable of sweetness, to ooze juicily at the last round the bearded lips of God, to attempt to impose, I say, laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen.' Dickens wouldn't have put it quite like that, nor would Carlyle, Wells or Kipling (although it must have been a close thing sometimes), but they certainly shared the sentiment. It was only by satirising the theme in this lasciviously conventional manner that Burgess could feel free to go ahead and expound it once again in a fresh and thoroughly unconventional disguise.

The novel tells how a teenage thug in a future of no great distance from now is imprisoned for murder, rehabilitated by a form of shock therapy, and restored hastily to his former self when the side effects of the rehabilitation drive him to attempt suicide and the popular press rushes to his support. His reign of terrorism given new respectability, he is even more potent than before—and at this point some editions of the book come to an end, glowing with anticipation. In others, Burgess has added a further chapter in which, worn out at eighteen, Alex decides to settle down and get married as soon as he can find the right girl. What clockwork couldn't achieve, the orange does for itself by going soft at the centre.

In transferring *Clockwork Orange* to the screen, Stanley Kubrick has dispensed both with the capsule explanation of what he is about and with the milk-and-water ending. The former is superfluous, the latter uncharacteristic. The activities of Alex DeLarge (and resemblances to Alexander the Great are more than nominal) are their own message, while it is more in the nature of Kubrick's heroes to go down fighting if they have to go at all than to resign the struggle in favour of a quiet life. More importantly, since *A Clockwork Orange* is primarily an assault upon the cosy, the comfortable and the mundane (precisely the unthinkingly obscene conservatism, in fact, that is expressed by Burgess's raving radical), even the suggestion of a Hollywood-hued sunset romance at its conclusion would be the most treacherous kind of emasculation. The film has taken from Burgess the fun and vitality of his novel and rejects its second-thought compromises, even if Kubrick, ironically enough, has added a compromise of his own here and there. Alex, for instance, has matured into his twenties (a ten-year-old

candidate for rape in the book has also shot up to well-endowed adulthood in the film), his drug-taking is confined to glasses of milk 'plus something else', a number of his less engaging exploits—including an extra killing during his period in prison—have been omitted, while his henchmen have become almost lovable.

Kubrick's most wholehearted adoption has been of the Burgess vocabulary, an argot compounded from Romany and Russian words that have been directly Anglicised: tolchok (hit), devotchka (girl), malenky (little), and, most memorable of them all, horrorshow (roughly translatable as 'very well'). Alex takes us into his confidence as the film begins, and the basic words are painlessly established, spoken with a chirpy and engagingly familiar Midlands accent: 'I could never stand to see a moodge all filthy and rolling and burping and drunk, especially when he was real starry like this one was.' The Burgess phrases have a rhythm and glitter to them which the film often maintains delightedly intact, both in the colloquialisms of Alex and his droogs and in the remarks of the more integrated members of society ('Love's young nightmare like,' observes one of the constables as he beats up Alex in the interrogation cell); and if the puzzle words become less prominent as the film ceases to need them, their echoes remain in Alex's unmistakable inflexions and his conspiratorial asides to his audience. Although the extent to which Russian has infiltrated the language of those least likely to have encountered it raises interesting conjecture as to political developments in Alex's tomorrow world, this is the first sustained success on film of what science fiction writers (notably Heinlein) have long used as a necessary element in describing plausible futures.

But then words, and the gaps between them, have always been important in Kubrick's work. He divides his dialogues into immense soliloquies like the rolling

catalogues spoken by General Ripper, the President, and even the bomber pilot in *Strangelove*, or alternatively into a nervous shorthand, like the clipped formalities of 2001. In *Clockwork Orange*, the unclassifiable poetry of Burgess has somehow become the same Kubrick vernacular—a duet between the articulate Alex, flourishing his words like torches in the air, and the brutish snarls of his opponents who, like the warder or the cat-lady, curse him with venom but without subtlety. And when Alex is forced into reticence, his place in the scene is taken by other smooth talkers: the teacher, the prison chaplain, the Minister, each with the same ability to talk in a kind of half-twist, their arguments as elusive as a Möbius strip. The result is Kubrick comedy, the subtle distortions quickly accumulating into surrealism to which the characters respond with earnest solemnity. An example in *Clockwork Orange* is the sequence in which the rehabilitated Alex is tested out in front of an audience of politicians and social workers. Glowingly introduced, he is suddenly set upon by a sinister man who forces Alex to lick his shoe, and by a semi-nude blonde whose invitation leaves him retching on the floor. The indignities are wildly applauded, his assailants bow ecstatically in the spotlight and skip off, and a discussion of the ethics of choice begins over Alex's head. It couldn't possibly work, but it does.

At the centre of all Kubrick's films is an endurance test, and *Clockwork Orange* continues the pattern. Like Humbert Humbert before him, Alex sets in motion an inescapable retribution and weathers it tolerably well (two years in prison, two weeks of treatment, two days of punishment at the hands of his former victims) before being forced into his suicide attempt by the allergy his treatment has given him to Beethoven's Ninth. Then, like Bowman in 2001, he is reborn ('I came back to life after black, black night for what might have been a million years'), and is rescued by events outside his control, carefully restored to his original anarchism by attentive specialists. His new wisdom gives him a tremendous, if unspecified, power which he can confidently be expected to devote to self-indulgence; the parallels to 2001 seem too clearly pointed to be accidental, not least the opening shot of *Clockwork Orange* in which the Star-child's unblinking gaze can be seen in the stare Alex gives us as the camera retreats from his face to the other side of the room. There is an awareness of potency in his look, a sense of power that, like General Ripper's, will be wielded not wisely but too well. The end of the world as we know it is in his eyes.

Not that Kubrick is repeating himself—far from it. His greatest accomplishment with *Clockwork Orange* has been to step briskly out from the shadow of 2001 and to resume film-making as though multi-million budgets had never been heard of. In case we might have forgotten, he reminds us of the skill with which he can structure a

Left, above: Malcolm McDowell. Below: '... a whole contemplative scene of torture.'

simple conversation scene in a simple domestic setting, extract perfect timing from his actors, select lighting and lenses with invincible authority, and edit his material ruthlessly into an unflagging pace (*Clockwork Orange* is well over two hours and feels like ninety minutes). His new film is boisterous, intimate, explicit and gaudy, none of which applied to *2001*. Instead of being in any apparent way concerned about whether he was going to be able to live up to *2001*, he has relaxed and enjoyed himself; and while it is difficult to imagine Alex and Bowman occupying anything remotely like the same century, Kubrick has contrived to show a fresh alternative future that owes nothing to *2001*'s aseptic architecture. The exteriors are glassy, box-like, and cluttered with rubbish, the interiors are lurid, inelegant and uneasily angular, with contemporary furniture that looks uncomfortably like tomorrow's suburban leftovers. Inhabiting these inhospitable cells, logically enough, are the aging exponents of today's fashions, locked as though ice-bound into their trendy gear.

Repeatedly, Kubrick opens his scenes with immense tracking shots, like the low-angle spin around the record boutique just ahead of Alex on the prowl, or the equally confident accompaniment to the psychiatrist sweeping through the wards with her trolley of equipment. The hand-held camera comes into action for scenes of urgency and impending disaster—Alex's fight with the cat-lady, the struggle through torrential rain, and the seemingly endless march towards an unknown destination as Alex's former gang members, now enlisted in the police force, lead him gloatingly off across muddy woodland. By contrast, he also uses static long-shots in which the human figures in the distance wander through an indeterminate choreography among settings made subtly ominous by his distorting lens. And more than one can recall his having done before, Kubrick uses subjective shots which place us in Alex's viewpoint, identify-

ing us with the hero of *Clockwork Orange* in his moments of greatest crisis—being crushed to the floor, lying powerless in the hospital, or, most unsettling of all, falling in despair from his window to smash himself on the paving below. The device ensures that Alex constantly has our sympathy, that, despite the occasional extremism of his high spirits, he remains (as in his own irrepressible view) merely the misunderstood victim of social injustice ready to accumulate a further load of misunderstanding as soon as he gets another opportunity.

'Actions speak louder than.' The phrase is one of Kubrick's favourites from *Clockwork Orange*, and the film could almost have been constructed around it. Movement is a vital part of each scene, a torrential, dancing flow that makes *2001* seem in retrospect to have approached the glutinous. The superb fight sequence quickly establishes the mood: in the derelict opera house, lit by huge shafts of light across its rubbish-strewn floor, two gangs confront each other gleefully and plunge into a ballet of dazzling violence, hurling each other through furniture and windows with slapstick enthusiasm. Urged on by, and often synchronised with, the thundering music of Rossini, their exhilaration then bursts out into the car-ride headlong through the night, scattering other traffic in wild panic and yelling with the sheer joy of speed. If there is any direct inheritance of the lessons learned during the shooting of *2001*, it lies in Kubrick's spectacular use of music in *Clockwork Orange*, where the soundtrack is as stirring as the photography: the William Tell Overture to accompany an orgy (twenty minutes rushing past in forty hilarious seconds), The Thieving Magpie to accompany a killing, and lovely, lovely Ludwig Van (beautifully arranged by Walter Carlos) to punctuate each phase of Alex's unsteady rise to certain power. There is even 'Singin' in the Rain', used rather as Kubrick used 'Try a Little Tenderness' and 'Auf Wieder-

sehen' in *Strangelove* to provide an ironic counterpoint to the events on the screen. With its connotations of betrayal, the song is the only indication at the end of *Clockwork Orange* that Alex's next series of outrages (attractively prefaced by the fantasy glimpse of his nude romp with a debutante beneath the approving gaze of Ascot racegoers) might have any conceivable limitation.

Finally, *Clockwork Orange* is a return to the Kubrick tradition of outstanding acting performances by his cast (necessarily somewhat muted in *2001*). Malcolm McDowell is ideal as Alex, whether required to fling his recalcitrant gang into the river in slow motion, cringe resentfully from authority, or face in growing horror the realisation that everything he values most in life is going to turn his stomach over from now on. His tortured face, encompassed by straps and wires, his eyelids held open by vicious clamps, is one of the most haunting sights the cinema has provided since the space wheel in *2001* or the brooding close-ups of Sterling Hayden in *Strangelove*.

The film is stolen, however, by Patrick Magee, playing what is in effect Alex's alter ego, the writer whose home is invaded and wife raped by Alex and his droogs. Magee's brand of intensity is familiar enough on the screen, but it is revitalised in *Clockwork Orange*: his abrupt cries at the table as he offers food to his increasingly nervous guest are as baroque and baleful as the involuntary shudders of the original Dr. Strangelove. As Magee enjoys his revenge, Beethoven blares out to swamp Alex's mind, and Kubrick's camera pulls back along a billiard table to reveal a whole contemplative, mellow scene of torture, one concludes, happily, that Kubrick justly deserves his reputation as the cinema's greatest perfectionist. ■

An interview with Stanley Kubrick, largely concerned with the themes and techniques of 'A Clockwork Orange', will be appearing in the Spring 1972 issue of SIGHT AND SOUND.

Alex (Malcolm McDowell) in battle with the cat-woman (Miriam Karlin)



Film REVIEWS



Fulton Mackay and Albert Finney in 'Gumshoe'

Gumshoe

The first thing to be said about *Gumshoe* (Columbia-Warner) is that it's an extraordinarily funny film, funny in a way that is neither patronising of its audience's intelligence nor complacent about its own. The second thing, that its humour is easier to describe than to categorise, though since—apart from the sheer wit of so much of the dialogue—its great strength lies in its ability to produce surprise twists in its already surprising variations on familiar themes and situations, it seems unfair to those who've not already seen it to spoil the fun with too much precise illustration. In other words, it's a film that's more satisfying to re-view than to review.

Gumshoe takes its title from the fantasy aspirations of its hero Eddie Ginley (Albert Finney), a Chandler-addict living in Liverpool's bedsitter belt, vaguely employed—between visits to the Labour Exchange—as a Bingo caller in a working men's club, dreaming of hitting the big time as a stand-up comic in Las Vegas and, in the twelve months since his Bacall-looking girlfriend Ellen (Billie Whitelaw) married his businessman brother (Frank Finlay), popping in for frequent chats with his demonstrably useless National Health psychiatrist. Somewhat uncertain of his own identity or usefulness, Eddie's conversation is largely made up of quotations from the people he would like to have been: Fifties rock-and-roll stars, Chandler again or, in his Fast Eddie mood, the hero of *The Hustler*. His style is a subtle combination of plagiarism and lucid self-parody ('It was my thirty-first birthday,' he announces in his best Bogart voice. 'Instead of staying

home to blow out my candles, I was at my psychiatrist's counting my marbles. The count was running slow.')

To celebrate his birthday, Eddie runs a joke Sam Spade advertisement in the *Liverpool Echo*, as a result of which he is summoned to the mysterious assignation where he gets his first glimpse of a man who uncannily resembles Sidney Greenstreet, and is handed a packet ('A gun, a grand and a girl—that's the kind of world I move in') intended for a professional gangster. Thereafter, to Eddie's disbelief and mounting panic, his fantasy world springs into incongruous life. The local Mafia apparently run him out of the Bingo business (the poor man's numbers racket?); the girls he meets all turn out to be beautiful behind their mandatory spectacles; a corpse appears in his flat; and a mysterious divorcée and a dourly betrilled Scotsman respond to his throwaway Chandlerisms as if they really lived through *The Big Sleep* every night. Rapidly discovering that the best way to get out of a 'movie' situation is to hit people with the movie clichés they recognise, Eddie marshals his feeble resources (an ex-Teddy boy, an unemployed burglar and his own vicarious experience) and rounds up a quartet of villains who prove to be no more experienced in crime than he is in detection. 'What a crummy lot they were,' he murmurs, as he contentedly settles down to some quality crime with his dog-eared green Penguin of *The Thin Man*.

If *Gumshoe* never risks turning into mere parody or flaccid homage, this is because, rather as in the earliest New Wave films, the clichés it playfully invokes (both iconographical and semiological, or, to put it less pompously, both the trench-coats and the stridently menac-

ing string score) are as much a reflection on themselves as on the past. The film acknowledges—and it's the first British film to do so successfully—that Hollywood clichés are part of the reality of most people's imaginings and posturings; and from the opening shot, with the location LIVERPOOL spelled out in Forties type over the standard postcard view, it delicately balances a simple nostalgia with a more complex consciousness of all that nostalgia implies. Cumulatively and unpretentiously, it explores the regrets and ambitions in the cracks of its characters' would-be cool façades. From the conjurers, singers and belly dancers (genuine ones) in the Bingo club, to the boss with his empty talk of taking Eddie to the top and his collection of forged signed photos of the stars, to Eddie himself, with his trench-coat, fedora and Buddy Holly records, *Gumshoe* locates its characters in that unsettling terrain where youthful dreams survive the death of youthful optimism.

'What do you want to do,' inquires the psychiatrist. 'I want to write *The Maltese Falcon*, I want to record "Blue Suede Shoes"', and I want to play Las Vegas,' comes the jokey but not so joking reply. The film's nostalgia, like its hero's, casts an eclectically wide net; but behind the wisecracks and the sentimental memories lurks a numbed disappointment that is the more convincing for never being expressed. The romantic ramifications of Eddie's relationship with Ellen are reflected only in their rare seconds of silence, while the film's one poignant moment comes at the end of Eddie's hilarious brief encounter with a former schoolfriend, when a lingering shot of the Dinky toys he's collecting 'for the lad' suggests the other, not-so-fantastic dream that Eddie has failed to realise.

As *Gumshoe* Ginley, Albert Finney gives a superlative performance, and the fact that the character's constant shifts of style and personality never become irritating owes a good deal to his ability to convey the pain and weariness that lie beneath the ebullient surfaces of the failed exhibitionist. Yet despite the obvious virtuoso aspect of Finney's characterisation, it's hard to view the film other than as an unusually felicitous piece of teamwork. Andrew Lloyd Webber's ersatz Forties score cleverly manipulates the audience even when humouring them with its extravagant parodies; Neville Smith's script is dazzlingly good and unassumingly literate; and the casting, with Fulton Mackay stealing several scenes with his laconic impersonation of a Glasgow tough, is impeccable.

That so many separate talents emerge so distinctly yet so harmoniously is perhaps the greatest compliment to Stephen Frears, whose self-effacing direction is all the more remarkable

Finney as *Gumshoe* Ginley





'Walkabout': David Gumpilil, Lucien John, Jenny Agutter

in a first feature film. He has discreetly imposed on his material two things sadly lacking in the British cinema of late: charm, and a thought-out consistency of style. Instead of the self-love that emerges via the works of Ken Russell, Frears' film communicates, and stimulates, a great love of the cinema.

JAN DAWSON

Walkabout

One of the best slogans I ever saw was painted on a ruined gable-end in Paddington. It read: 'More Anthropology Less Revolution'. It came to mind during Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout* (Fox). One searches first for comparisons with other films about the Australian outback. There haven't been so many, and the fact that Ted Kotcheff's *Outback* appeared in England in the same month is a strange coincidence. But Roeg's film is not really concerned with Australia itself, as Kotcheff's is. Rather he has chosen it, it seems, as a vivid example of two opposed cultures living side by side: the Europeanised, metropolitan Aussie and the Aboriginal. The real comparison is with his and Donald Cammell's earlier film, *Performance*. Even there the cultures—principally 'straight' and criminal, with all the questions that begs—were symbiotic: they preyed on one another, they lived on one another. *Walkabout* in a sense goes further, since the cultures are mutually exclusive. They derive no comfort from one another, achieve no understanding. Their meeting leads to inevitable tragedy and disintegration. The first, the modern and metropolitan, is irredeemably dismissive of the second, the aboriginal, and that in turn is too primitive to be flexible.

The word 'primitive' of course begs all questions, and it might be fair to say that the film is an attempt to define it anew. The story is simple enough. A middle-aged Sydney businessman, oppressed by city life, drives his two children, a 14-year-old daughter (Jenny Agutter) and a 6-year-old son (Lucien John) out into the desert, apparently for a picnic. Once there, however, he tries but fails to shoot them before successfully committing suicide. They wander off aimlessly and are fortunate to find a water hole and a few berries. When this source is exhausted they encounter an aboriginal boy (David Gumpilil) on his 'walkabout'—an extended manhood trial involving months of single-handed survival in the outback. He takes them under his protection, steering them away from contact with whites, providing for them,

instructing them in the arts of survival. At an abandoned homestead the Aborigine begins a ritual courtship dance which must end only with his acceptance by the girl. She refuses to understand, scarcely disguising her relief that they appear to be within reach of her civilisation once more. He dances all night. In the morning they find him hanging in a tree, dead. The girl and her brother, unperturbed, make their way to a nearby road and thence to a settlement where, though coldly received, they are returned to the city. Years later the girl, now married, is seen to greet her husband after his hard day at the office, exactly as her mother must have done. He talks of promotion. She dreams of the outback.

There are obvious dangers in turning such an outline into a credulous fable which would accommodately digest all manner of fashionable preoccupations: pollution, population, angst, alienation. The gamut of pundits, from Lévi-Strauss through Lorenz to McLuhan, one might feel, has been well run; and indeed the film doesn't altogether escape, at two viewings, from the suspicion that at least some of the charges might stick in an unsympathetic court. The rather pointed radio programmes discussing *pâté de foie gras*, etiquette for the housewife, maths by radio, the absurd elocution lessons the girl has in school, smack heavily of the scriptwriter Edward Bond's obsessive hand. Never one to poke you with his sword when he can use a battleaxe, he may be the one who labours the comparison between killing and eating meat on the hoof and its refined city equivalent.

What makes the film triumph over this literalness is another kind of intensity which one feels, since it's a film-maker's, is all Roeg's. Metaphors which might otherwise be lumpish take wing by the grace of his eye and ear. Whoever devised it—and I may be doing Bond a great injustice—the moment when the little boy's tongue flicks out to pick up salt from the palm of a hand says all that need be said about our animal links, and it is convincing that the boy, being closer to the natural by virtue of his age, is more easily able than his sister to adapt to aboriginal life. He communicates unaffectedly by signs with the Aborigine, while she is unable to devise a better way of instructing him in English than to bark commands at him.

Similarly, a rich soundtrack, built up partly from the babel of the electronic village, partly from animal cries, partly from Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, appropriately deepens the references Roeg is making with the camera. The little boy slides down a sandhill and the sand closes over his path, leaving no trace. He and his sister,

sleeping exhausted under a flower-embroidered net, seem to sink into the desert, to become, in sleep, a part of nature, borrowing some of the rock's immobility, breathing into it a little of their own life. Reptiles, photographed in close-up, tower like friendly dinosaurs while the boy's war-toys shrink into pettiness, taking the idea of man's wars with them. The sun, gorgeous, orange and massive, swims above the rim of the world, menacingly explosive. It's beautiful all right, and we are almost swept up by the Housman quotation which accompanies the city-pent epilogue:

'That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.'

But only almost. Such an idyll cannot be taken neat. From anthropology Roeg and Bond descend to mere revolution. That pleasurable complexity is betrayed by this simple conservationist message. If the film suddenly slumps into setting social problems and answering them, then we must ask other questions too. What innocence is lost? Is survival of the fittest an agreeable social plan? How else control disease, promote hygiene, comfort; the arts of culture as distinct from survival? The questions don't belong to the best parts of *Walkabout*, and neither do the answers. The savage is not noble, the sophisticate not corrupt. Trying to prove it, one way or another, in the face of the camera's evidence, would be a betrayal of the film's real vision.

GAVIN MILLAR

Days and Nights in the Forest

Days and Nights in the Forest . . . the very title rings with enchantment, and the old Ray magic is soon at work again. This time the spell is a rug spread out in the sun, a picnic by the river, a charmingly silly parlour-game. Nothing much happens during this key sequence, but the setting holds the same promise of peace and fulfilment as the garden with the sun rippling over the girl on the swing in *Charulata*, the music room emerging from its chrysalis of disuse in *Jalsaghar*, or the snowy peak appearing from behind the mists in *Kanchenjunga*. Elsewhere the problems of the world may hang heavy, but not in these oases where Ray's characters, their dreams and their surroundings merge in a harmony that momentarily suspends time.

Once again the familiar comparisons spring to mind: Chekhov for the comedy of pretensions and the tragedy of lost opportunity, Henry James for the sense of feelings, confessions, explanations, reverberating beneath a moment of silence. But the odd fact remains that whereas it would be impossible to detach Chekhov's characters, or indeed James's, from their very precise social contexts, Ray's characters seem to belong so essentially to no other time than their own that they could step quite easily out of *Charulata* into *Days and Nights in the Forest*, bridging three-quarters of a century in the process. Partly, of course, this is because aspects of Victoriana have survived quaintly in Indian life; partly because Ray has a respect for traditional (especially cultural) values which is hardly shared by modern society; but mostly because he withdraws so determinedly from the tempo of this technological age that time becomes almost as important a factor in his films as it is with Resnais (though in a very different way).

Days and Nights in the Forest (Contemporary) opens, for instance, with a car journey as four young men from Calcutta set off for a holiday in the country. We are given no idea how far they are going, nor how long the drive has taken them. One moment they are pausing for petrol, the next they are pulling up before an invitingly empty rest-house. Even the long-held shot of the forest flashing by gives less an impression of speed than of an alien landscape which is

waiting, hostile and impenetrable, to baffle the intruder. And yet the sequence as a whole is a lengthy one, because Ray uses the incidents and frustrations of the journey as a perfect excuse to explore his characters at leisure.

Hari brooding irritably over a broken love affair, Sanjoy quietly reading in a corner, the irrepressible Sekhar joking and bouncing about, Ashim taking the wheel and surveying life with lordly amusement. These deft little observations at first seem like amusing character notations, no more; but as soon as the four men automatically pair off to occupy the two rooms at the rest-house, one realises that Ray has not only defined each man perfectly, but given an exact gauge of his limits and capacities. Reverting to school terminology, one might see Ashim as the head prefect, brilliant and self-assured, and Sanjoy as the quiet boy who admires but does not aspire to emulate him; Hari as the handsome sporting hero, who chums up with the scatter-brained Sekhar because he is too dull-witted to be irritated like everyone else by the latter's shrill, ingratiating eagerness to be popular. This almost scientific classification is important because it suggests that Ashim is the only one of the four with sufficient strength of character, as well as the intellectual capacity, to profit from their time out from time in a world of almost perfect stasis. A summer's day, a forest clearing, two women strolling wistfully in a shady avenue, love and the need for love echoing as plangently as the mysterious sound that haunts *The Cherry Orchard*.

Parenthetically, but still pursuing the theme of time, it is interesting that the most frequent criticism levelled against Ray by his detractors is that his films are too slow, and by his admirers, that he cannot handle melodrama (e.g. much of *Abhijan*, the end of *Mahanagar*, the assault on Hari in *Days and Nights in the Forest*). Opposite ends of the same candle, these criticisms arise because Ray's cinema is essentially one of contemplation in which both he and his characters like to ponder first, act afterwards. A good illustration is the scene in *Days and Nights in the Forest* where the four young men wake up after a heavy night of drinking to find they have overslept a formal invitation to breakfast. Dismally aware of their breach of etiquette, but unaware that their hosts know all about the reason for it, the hangdog quartet trail off to make their apologies. But time has not frozen on the social gaffe in their hosts' home as it has for them: the old man is singing his devotions, his daughter is busy with a book, his little grandson with a game. And as they—and the film—wait for the song to end, unwilling to be so graceless as to interrupt, the moment is miraculously bridged so that an apology is no longer necessary and the crisis is reduced to its proper proportions as a joke.

Time, in this sense, plays a key role throughout the film, since it not only creates the comedy of embarrassments which bursts the balloon of Ashim's pomposity—confronting him with the ladies whenever his debonair self is most absurdly compromised—but allows him to profit by his experiences. For time, in effect, stands still between the flashback near the beginning where we see a supercilious Ashim at a cocktail party while Aparna hovers in the background, and the moment at the end when she scribbles her telephone number for him on a five-rupee note. In between these two points, the Ashim whom Aparna says she didn't even want to meet because he was so conceited disappears; he becomes a new person, forced to acknowledge his own shallowness in the face of suffering, and with whom Aparna, one might say, falls in love at first sight.

The theme is brilliantly extended and completed by the two main subplots involving Hari and Sanjoy (Sekhar, being essentially a hanger-on, has no subplot of his own). For Sanjoy, a weaker version of Ashim, already so overwhelmed by self-doubt that he is fully aware of his inadequacies, time provides not a long hiatus

but a brief moment of affirmation. The young widow, with whom he has been dabbling in a flirtation bordering on love, makes him a gift of herself and her need; but he hesitates, and is lost.

Hari, on the other hand, is the exact opposite of Ashim and Sanjoy, and his place in Ray's scheme is one of disruption rather than eventual harmony. Already, in the early flashback of his quarrel with his fiancée in Calcutta, he is revealed as a man of impulse, of action rather than reflection; and everything he does in the film—his passion for 'Miss India', his accusation of the servant—shows him jumping the gun, plunging into action before time has had its say. Hence (time is out of joint) the disruptive melodrama of the attack on Hari in the forest by the aggrieved servant.

I could go on endlessly about the subtle correspondances which underlie the film, supporting its intricately formal structure, but one will have to suffice. Just as preparations for the picnic are completed, Hari is standing a little apart, brooding unhappily on the river bank. Aparna comes to summon him, but as he rejoins the party, she pauses for a moment, almost unconsciously taking his place and pose to stare out over the river. Suddenly, jumping like an electric spark between them, one sees his self-pity ignite in her as compassion. Then she returns to the picnic, and the moment passes, to lie dormant until she finally manages to fan it alive again in Ashim. Of such moments are poetic masterpieces made.

TOM MILNE

bounty hunter she has employed to guide her through the unknown terrain. It would appear that the two relatives are killed in the final exchange of shots.

For those who like their Westerns straight, and no nonsense, *The Shooting* is best left alone despite its evident merits as a Western—the startling bursts of action, the monosyllabic conversations, the methodical progress towards predestined hostilities. Its construction is not unlike that of the children's puzzle carried by one of the doomed men in the group: compact, circular, an enclosed picture with scooped hollows into which the steady hand and the elastic patience might briefly roll a few grains of buckshot. No sooner has everything dropped into place than the game starts again, a tiny universe of quicksilver atoms, spinning and purposeless. Hellman's view of things, on this evidence, is both nihilistic and fatalistic; our lives and deaths may be no more than a series of accidents, but they conform to a pattern that has been determined outside our control and comprehension. We are unknowingly part of a game that has rules only to be guessed at and which may well have nothing to do with logic. We must make the best we can of the shapes that form and disintegrate around us.

The fun to be had from *The Shooting* lies in the process of capturing its fleeting scraps of information as they skim past and guiding them into place on a surface as pitted as a solitaire board. Given, for instance, that it's a film about a man being hunted, it can be seen as the story of one man, not two. Will Gashade, leaving a



'Days and Nights in the Forest': Sharmila Tagore, Robi Ghose, Soumitra Chatterjee

The Shooting

GASHADE: *I don't see no point to it.*
WOMAN: *There isn't any.*

The story of Monte Hellman's *The Shooting* (Ember) is an elusive and deliquescent uncertainty, a bright mirage above shifting planes of supposition. A quartet of characters drifts together in the desert in a conventionally indeterminate Western period and setting, and they ride with a somnambulistic sense of compulsion along a trail that leads them at last to a man on the run. It's difficult to be more specific about the narrative without venturing into speculation, but one might hazard that the unnamed woman who heads the group is intent on avenging the death of a child, and that her quarry is related to (indeed the twin of) the

clear trail of flour for his trackers to follow, assumes the blame for having been unable to save his partners, and having faced up to his own guilt, kills himself. The woman and her accompanying gunman, in this version, would assume the convenient role of agents of death, Cocteau fashion. And as in Cocteau, their victim prefers his death to have some meaning, if only one of compensation—which is why (one might infer) Gashade puts the professional gunman out of action but is unable to deflect the enigmatic woman from her mission. Interpretation running wild? Maybe, and yet the first materialisation of the woman suggests emphatically that Gashade is facing a supernatural force: awaiting the expected but unknown visitor, he glances momentarily at a buzzard in the sky, and when he looks back at the

brow of the hill the woman is standing there, contemplating him with impassive arrogance. It's an encounter that echoes the shoreline scenes Hellman contributed to *The Terror*, where a witch-woman stares at the hero across a jumble of rocks and waves and almost seduces him into drowning himself. Corman's survivors were the young and innocent, but Hellman's, on the contrary, are the figures of retribution; the final image of *The Shooting* is of the gunman staggering on his way, an endless vista of impersonal killings imaginably ahead of him.

Or one can see the film, less pretentiously perhaps, as the surviving fragments of some other story, long since lost. Like *Ride in the Whirlwind*, which Hellman and Jack Nicholson were making simultaneously, its genesis lay in the diaries of cowmen, settlers, and prospectors of the early West, whose references and recollections hinted at dramas of which only the desert itself knew the outcome. A woman's family is destroyed, by accident or design, and she has nothing left to live for but the eradication of the men responsible; the trail leads to Gashade's camp, and to be sure of her prey she must persuade Gashade and his companion to accompany her in pursuit of the missing member of the group. Yet even this plausible story structure has its curiosities. Why, for example, does Gashade need to lay the trail to ensure that he is followed, when the woman and her hired gun already know the location of his camp (having shot the superbly named Leland Drum there the night before)? Where, for that matter has Gashade been? And what was in the letter entrusted by the woman to the bearded man she had sent after the fugitive and who is later found dying in the sun? It grows increasingly like a spy thriller in which, by some printer's oversight, half the pages are blank.

Failing possession of the answers, one must settle for the rich fragments themselves. With hardly an exception (some unhelpful shots of a circle to signify the heat of the sun, some exchanges of dialogue so colloquial as to be unintelligible), they are more than enough justification for rating Hellman's work very highly. As menace approaches Gashade's camp, the camera glides around him to watch Coley, his ingenuous partner, running for cover with a flour-sack, its contents strewn into the air like smoke behind him; as the horses die off in the desert, the camera holds an endless shot of two men on one mount, jogging listlessly in a limbo without perspectives. The scene in which Gashade is forced at gunpoint to leave Coley behind in the desert, and the later one in which Coley, having incautiously tried to join the group once more, is pursued and shot, also find Hellman a master in the art of putting his camera, quite unpredictably, in the right place at the right time. He matches the absorbing imprecision of his subject with a spectacular precision of technique; and if there needs to be a point to *The Shooting*, this, surely, is enough.

PHILIP STRICK

Straw Dogs

If sheer skill in film-making were enough, *Straw Dogs* (Cinerama) could probably be hailed unassailably as Peckinpah's best film to date: an astonishing parabola of terror in which the pale horse of the Apocalypse hovers grimly over a quiet Cornish farmhouse. And yet there is an uncomfortable gap at the centre of the film which leaves one—or perhaps I should say me—uninvolved and unmoved in a way no other Peckinpah film has done.

Straw dogs, we are told, are the brainchild of an ancient Chinese philosopher, sacrificial substitutes who 'were treated with the greatest deference before they were used as an offering, only to be discarded and trampled upon as soon as they had served their purpose'. So when the American astro-mathematician (Dustin Hoff-



'Straw Dogs': Dustin Hoffman

man) arrives on a sabbatical in darkest Cornwall, one knows what to expect. As befits a stranger in a strange land, he is kept at a distance by the villagers with a long-handled spoon manipulated with a mixture of mockery and awe; his English wife (Susan George), being a native of the place, is humiliated and cast aside after a ruthless gang-rape; and he himself, gradually discovering what is happening to him, is finally cornered into defending, even at the cost of five appalling deaths, a dubious principle.

The ironies, quite apart from the focal theme that violence breeds violence, are there for the asking. Most notably, that the ivory-towerish professor left America partly to escape the kind of unreasoning violence he now has to confront in both himself and the Cornishmen; and that if he is a victim of xenophobic ignorance, then so in a sense are they. Not so much because, in rushing to his defence of the homicidal village idiot which sparks off the final holocaust, he is jumping to precisely the hasty conclusions and blind violence he believes himself to be fighting, as because he acts primarily from a primitive instinct to defend his own territory, his home, against invasion.

At times, indeed, there is a touch of the horror film about *Straw Dogs*, as Hoffman shuts himself away in his castle with his terrified wife and the whimpering idiot whom he has offered sanctuary, while outside the forces of evil batter at his defences. But what has all this to do with straw dogs? What, in fact, are these straw dogs sacrificial substitutes for? With the exception of the murder of the cat, found hanged in a clothes closet as either a grim taunt or a mysterious warning, the whole film evolves on such a mundane level of cause and effect that there really seems to be no answer. (One might, of course, argue that the straw dogs are not human but moral—the alibis people offer themselves for their violence—but it doesn't feel right somehow.) The psychological motivation is crisp and strictly logical: Hoffman is cool and intellectual and self-sufficient, therefore he is kept on the outside edge of the mocking village circle; his wife is flirtatious, uncertain, sexually drawn to an old flame, therefore she is raped; a girl from the village is found dead, therefore the idiot is hunted, therefore Hoffman intervenes, therefore . . .

Perhaps all I am saying is that I miss the quality of legend in Peckinpah's earlier films, the quality of inevitability as his characters are driven haplessly to their destiny by their own myths. Both they and the audience know, or half know, exactly where they are headed and that there is nothing they can do about it

except 'enter their house justified' like Steve Judd, or prepare to die a clean death, like Pike Bishop. At the end of *Straw Dogs*, Hoffman emerges from his dark tunnel of violence to drive the village idiot safely home, leaving five mutilated bodies littered around his house. Smiling contentedly to himself, he picks his way through the foggy darkness, and as the idiot apologetically murmurs, 'I don't know my way home,' he simply grins reassuringly and replies, 'That's all right, nor do I.' In one sense, this perfectly sums up the ambivalence of the film's circle of violence (does Hoffman emerge into light or into darkness?). In another, it suggests that Hoffman neither knows where he is going nor where he has been morally, and rings a little like the 'So what?' with which one reacts, once the initial impact of horror has died away, to a newspaper account of some mysterious tragedy.

Curiously enough, the quality I find lacking is actually present in Gordon Williams' original novel, *Siege at Trencher's Farm*, but has been filtered out in the process of adaptation. Two themes in particular are missing: the years of in-breeding among the villagers, fostering a tightly knit community coloured in various ways by the threat of madness; and the mysterious murder in the field years ago, a secret jealously guarded by the inhabitants almost as a fetish keeping them alive and in thrall. Here, hemmed in by oblique hints of ritual murder, the two visitors really are straw dogs, sacrificial victims who cause the heavens to fall by refusing to accept their appointed role.

This said, however, *Straw Dogs* is a magnificent piece of craftsmanship, building coldly from a deliberately hesitant opening (awkward cuts, moves, dialogue transitions as Dustin Hoffman stumbles perplexedly through his first encounter with the mysterious rites of English village life), to the razor-sharp cross-cutting at the church social (where everything comes to a point with the murder of the girl), and the final manic assault on the senses of the ending. I can think of no other film which screws violence up into so tight a knot of terror that one begins to feel—like standing in a church listening to the throbbing bass notes of an organ rock the very foundations—that civilisation is crumbling before one's eyes. The pity of it is that the reverberations cease with the film.

TOM MILNE

Family Life

Realism in the cinema has come a long way since Zavattini's woman buying a pair of shoes. In the last few years in Britain, possibly as a reaction against the sentimental romanticism of Free Cinema, realist cinema has been characterised by a fundamental pessimism, the very antithesis of the post-war Italians' brave confidence in the miraculous potential of the man in the street. Films as variously in touch with reality as *Up the Junction*, *The Whisperers*, *Kes*, have created their own iconography: depressed suburbia, bleak industrial wastelands, the seedy bureaucracies of schools, hospitals, labour exchanges. A kind of negative didacticism prevails, engendered in the spate of television 'documentary' plays about the rejects of an affluent society.

Ken Loach's *Family Life* (MGM-EMI) is a fairly typical example. It began life as a television play, *In Two Minds* by David Mercer, a case history of a girl's mental illness constructed out of interviews (by an unseen camera 'voice') with the girl and her parents. For the big screen (and why it's on the big screen in these days of media interdependence is a good question) Mercer has expanded his original play, writing in an extra character and a few scenes where 'action' rather than talk predominates. The basic interview format has been retained, with the difference that the 'voice' is now a

three-dimensional character—a sympathetic psychiatrist—a visual identification which in itself amounts to an implicit admission that the cinema is somehow less immediate than the television screen.

It's not difficult to see what attracted Loach to the subject. *Family Life* is an illustration of the controversial theories of the psychiatrist R. D. Laing: environment rather than inadequacies of self as the root cause of mental illness. Like *Kes*, Loach's new film is an indictment of a society straitjacketed by norms. It opens with a suburban panorama, row upon row of statutory sameness in the now familiar metaphor for environmental conformity. We then cut to a London underground station, where a girl sits numbly watching the trains go by until someone decides to remove her. She is escorted home by the police, which starts her parents asking questions. Gradually, as the girl, Jan (Sandy Ratcliff), and her parents (Bill Dean and Grace Cave) talk to a psychiatrist, it emerges that she is mildly schizophrenic. Her case history unfolds episodically: an unexceptional lower middle-class background; parents who have done everything for her except allow her the luxury of her own inclinations; from herself a respect for her parents' will arising partly out of love, partly out of a reluctance to follow her elder sister in severing relations with them. From this has developed a gradual deterioration in her own self-respect, characterised by casual affairs, an unstable relationship with her current boyfriend, an unwanted abortion, and a progressive mental detachment.

This progress from occasional distractedness to advanced schizophrenia and finally total withdrawal is charted with a harrowing inevitability. And every stage in Jan's decline is shown to be prompted by a wilful adherence to conventional modes of behaviour, whether familial (her parents project their own unadmitted failures on to her) or medical (the 'progressive' psychiatrist, whose group therapy methods seem to be helping Jan, is replaced by a hospital board decision which blithely ignores the success of those methods). Her only positive response is from her boyfriend, whose temporary encouragement stems less from understanding Jan than from his own vaguely defined hostility to authoritarianism, clumsily symbolised by his and Jan's spray-painting of her father's garden gnomes.

Jan is last seen as a lecture theatre guinea pig, seeming by her mute withdrawal almost to acquiesce in the psychiatrist's pronouncement that there are no discernible environmental factors in her case. The film is a depressingly convincing demonstration of the howling inaccuracy of that diagnosis; nearly every scene has been a stage in the elaboration of a point of view diametrically opposed to this traditional analysis. In their interviews with the sympathetic psychiatrist, and in their stumbling attempts to communicate with their errant daughter, Jan's parents reveal themselves as inflexible bigots hamstrung by their own inhibitions. Her mother is a classic demonstration of the stifling vacuity of suburban gentility, registering dismay at every deviation from her own circumscribed norms, shocked into comment, for instance, when the psychiatrist's secretary actually calls him by his Christian name; her father, who admits to the indiscretion of marrying above his own point on the social scale, also admits—with a barely suppressed tinge of regret—to a lack of sexual satisfaction in his marriage (his wife is 'not like that' because she had 'a good upbringing').

That Jan's illness is rooted in her 'failure' to respond to environmental pressures is established beyond doubt; and in the film's episodic framework, established to devastating effect. One's misgivings about *Family Life* stem not so much from its accuracy as a clinical case history as from its way of assembling the 'facts' of that case history. Inevitably schematic in its structuring of these facts, the film undermines its

persuasively realist centre by overstating its case. Jan's parents are immediately recognisable as types; and paradoxically, that is precisely what obstructs one's belief in them as real people. Like the sportsmaster in *Kes* (though admittedly less energetically), the actors have been encouraged to play to a preconceived notion of people as types, recognisable certainly but recognisable for their caricatural accuracy rather than the picture they present of the infinite unpredictability of real people. The result is a kind of scripted improvisation which rings only partly true because one is constantly aware that the characters are activating conditioned reflexes in one's own mind (the traditionalist psychiatrist is white-coated; the gnome-painting episode comes immediately after a cosy denunciation of the horrors of suburban conformity, and so on). *Family Life* is a lot more 'real' than the overrated *Kes*; but a film which has prejudice as its theme doesn't gain from playing on the prejudices of its audience.

DAVID WILSON

Traffic

Tati's move from the village to the big city, via the Paris suburbs of *Mon Oncle*, has been greeted with a predictable chorus of critical dismay. *Playtime* seemed his final turning away from a comic tradition indigenous to the French cinema since Pagnol, the satirical-affectionate portrait of village life, and signified the end of 'the Tati whose postmen, small boys and dogs were such a source of delight'. Over-reacting to this transition, critics summarily pigeonholed *Playtime* as an anti-modernity satire, another film about man dwarfed and dehumanised by the glass-and-steel monsters he has erected, failing to see that, as an artist, Tati draws no distinction between life in the city and life in the village. Man finds the same challenge, even encouragement, to his good humour, observation and capacity to improvise in the concrete jungle, or on the

motorway, as he does in the vagaries of provincial life. Tati's humour has always been creative, rather than merely observant, and the closing shots of *Playtime*—the congested roundabout backed by fairground carousel music, the bus levitating in a window reflection to an exclamatory chorus from its passengers—embrace the challenge of the urban maze by exhorting us, 'The modern city is here to stay: you can't beat it, so join it.'

That sequence also paves the way for *Traffic* (Columbia-Warner). The film was originally a joint project by Tati and the Dutch film-maker Bert Haanstra. Whatever the reasons for Haanstra's departure, the collaboration was unlikely to have proved ideal. Haanstra's comic vision is essentially malicious, the art of catching human beings off their guard at an instinctive behaviouristic low, while Tati's is a celebration of man's struggle to transcend the indignities of life. (Tati has said that Hulot's own walk indicates the wish to 'have one's nose in the stars', even if one's feet are firmly earthbound.)

Stylistically, *Playtime* and *Traffic* reflect Tati's description of his films as an 'invitation to the public to come with me behind the camera'. Tati is showing us how to look at the world creatively, and his favourite method of bringing the environment to life, of humanising the twentieth century, is by transforming whatever is hostile or amorphous into something surrealistically recognisable. During the crossroads pile-up in *Traffic*, a car pursues its detached front wheel with its bonnet flapping up and down like some ravenous beast of prey; a hippy's woolly jacket masquerades as a dead penguin; and in the film's funniest sequence, M. Hulot, attempting to scale the front of a house, detaches an entire wall of ivy which sags like a false beard and defies all his gymnastic attempts to hitch it up from the top of an adjacent tree. These scenes are in the classic Tati tradition.

But while defending the consistency of Tati's vision as a humorist, it has to be admitted that *Traffic* is a fitful and disappointing successor to *Playtime*. Part of the reason is the almost exclusive reliance on quick, one-shot gags.

'Family Life': Grace Cave, Sandy Ratcliff





'A New Leaf': Elaine May, Walter Matthau

Some of these are good (an official demonstrating the latest snap-shut car bonnet is seen to sport a heavily bandaged middle finger), but many are as hurriedly and carelessly executed as the film's deplorable polyglot dubbing. Tati's plots have always been tenuous threads linking a disparate succession of jokes, but at least the four 'movements' of *Playtime* allowed room for the development of extended gags within an episodic format (Hulot vainly pursuing a business colleague through a maze of office cubicles, watched by an omniscient overhead camera). In *Traffic* the extended or recurring joke is a rarity. Those that do occur—harassed motor show functionaries seeking periodic refuge in a cardboard birch forest with tape-recorded birdsong, the survivors of the pile-up emerging from their cars to perform silent callisthenics by the roadside, Hulot's adventures with the ivy—show Tati at his surrealist best, richly expanding (or refining) a slender joke beyond its initial promise. Finally, though, such sequences only aggravate one's impatience at the fragmented, hit-or-miss quality of the rest of the film.

NIGEL ANDREWS

A New Leaf

Stage, television and nightclub comedienne Elaine May comes out as film writer-director-star, and turns in a somewhat indefinable performance, at once original and broadly derivative. One safe assertion is that she is unlikely to be accused of a quick surrender to fashion, as was her former partner in the comedy team of Nichols and May. The stylistic facility that earned Mike Nichols an Academy Award on his second movie is not part of Miss May's equipment. *A New Leaf* (Paramount) has that rather plain and graceless look which combines the functional needs of stage and television comedy. Admittedly there is some dabbling with more respected models—the film opens with a visual gag of a type refined by Buster Keaton, and the storyline itself is vaguely reminiscent of Keaton's *Seven Chances*. But then the tragedy of Henry Graham, middle-aged bachelor and profligate of a now exhausted private income, and his efforts to find a marriageable heiress, to appropriate the fortune and then dispose of its owner, has its own classic status which Elaine May chooses not to update, or at least only for occasional and very specific comic effect.

But to emphasise the old-fashioned air of the material, or its over cautious and theatrical treatment, would obscure as much here as the reaction against their up-to-the-minute trends distorts the qualities of Nichols' films. *A New Leaf* keeps the current phobias of American comedy firmly out of sight, with a rigour of approach that is more than just the artificially airtight conventions of its story. The society inhabited by Henry Graham, all hyper-refined and aristocratic tedium, has a perverse dislocation from any American reality. It is blandly characterised by Henry's vaguely English but perfectly generalised activities at his club, a languid canter along a bridle-path, or the exquisite boredom of hearing about the current blight in a friend's garden. Henry's one capable anchor to the world outside is the very English valet who compliments him at one moment with, 'You are keeping alive a tradition that was dead before you were born,' and reminds him at the next that, 'In this country, there is no genteel poverty.' (Both lines aptly anticipated by the scene where Henry, after hearing of his financial downfall, drives his red Ferrari through a ghetto neighbourhood of New York, oblivious to his surroundings, while intoning to himself 'I'm poor, I'm poor'.)

This cultural joke at the centre of the film, a wrenching and rearranging of social contexts—*The Great Gatsby* as written by P. G. Wodehouse—conditions its response to the characters. Peculiarly isolated and plainly ridiculous in their situation and their private obsessions, they are still permitted to be discreetly real in their absurdity. Henry Graham, splendidly incarnated by Walter Matthau, is at first a weary monolith of supercilious detachment. Only the constant complaint from the mechanics of his daily existence that 'there's carbon on the valves' wears away at his Olympian indifference to the details of living. Unneurotic in his apathy, as massively self-sufficient and vulnerable to the minutiae of existence as a dinosaur, he might have the mysterious allure of the Fitzgerald character, were it not for the fact that he lacks magic. A romantic egotist, he no longer sees any romance in enjoying his wealth, only an unquestioned and necessary habit.

He is matched by Henrietta Lowell (Elaine May), his eventual choice as the ideally stacked marriage partner, gauche, gawky, uncoordinated, socially a disaster area and personally totally absorbed in botanical pottering. The wistful, fierce integrity of these personalities, viewed with a detached amusement, allows the film to

bypass the usual agenda of subjects (sex, the System, etc.) of current comedy concerned with vanishing human identity, and lends a particular vivacity to the comic set-pieces. There is the scene between Henry and his bank manager, the latter struggling with infinite patience and not a trace of condescension to paint a picture of financial ruin for a belligerently uncomprehending Henry; or the dismissal of the servants, who have been blatantly exploiting Henrietta's dizzying unworldliness and have rightly guessed that Henry's is a marriage for his own convenience, but wrongly guessed he would accept them as allies.

In the last half-hour, the satirical distance and the cynical theme seem to be losing their grip, with Henry discovering a purpose in life in nurse-maiding his wife, and finally abandoning his murder plan and accepting his new role. The stage is set for the kind of happy ending that Mike Nichols was rapped over the knuckles for in *The Graduate*. But Henry's development reveals something not quite so rosy. He progresses from pillar of futility to bustling man of action, briskly reviving Henrietta's household while poring over books on toxicology, and eventually to defeated resignation. While Henrietta remains in a state of ignorance so blissful that it seems less than human, Henry returns to indolence with just a twinge of self-awareness.

The movement in fact is close to that of *The Graduate*, with the latter's furious acting out of roles, its bemused acceptance of the futility of both speech and action, and a final weary closing of the circle on a happy ending which is not quite that. Nichols' art suggests a ringmaster's display of 'turns', a parading of masks, while Miss May organises her entertainment with very conscious touches of theatrical artifice (the romantic props of country lane, full moon, golden sunset are whisked on and off very quickly), and has her characters act out their obsessions with touching intensity and showmanship.

RICHARD COMBS

Nicholas and Alexandra

One of the ironies of the calamitous reign of Nicholas the Second, pointed out by Robert Massie in his book, is that the gentle, pacific Tsar should have been dubbed 'Bloody Nicholas', while his fierce and bloodthirsty ancestors are remembered by kinder epithets. *Nicholas and Alexandra* (Columbia-Warner) contains another irony: that Franklin Schaffner, whose previous films have caught the ambivalence of arrogant and brutal heroes who had the power to set the world turning, should find in Nicholas an insufficient subject and finally lose him, in the course of a three-hour epic, somewhere in between the vast sprawl of events and the rather impersonal, Macchiavellian ideal of power politics dispensed by scriptwriter James Goldman.

A bold attempt is made to apply the method of an intimate epic to the collapse of the dynasty. So far as the film has any central protagonist it is the entire Romanov family, and as far as it has any dominant theme it is the withdrawal of the household from the world at large into the secret tragedy of the Tsarevich's illness. The horror of the imperial couple's powerlessness to deal with disasters in either sphere is characterised by an unstaunched flow of blood, by Alexis' accusation that his father, in signing away the dynasty, has denied him his life as well ('Instead, I just bleed'), and by the computation of the revolutionary Yakovlev of the Russian blood that Nicholas poured into the European war, six quarts to a man times the millions of lives lost. To explain the turmoil that broke the Romanovs, to justify their downfall as either an historical inevitability or the product of bizarre personalities and events (accepting Kerensky's statement

that 'without Rasputin, there could have been no Lenin') is a daunting task. Robert Massie invokes both Fate and History, and then settles for an explanation of Nicholas as a courageous and intelligent individual confronted by awesome circumstances.

The same middle of the road view underlies the film, which remains firmly in the personal sphere while detailing the early years of the reign of Nicholas and Alexandra—the birth of Alexis, the discovery of his haemophilia, Nicholas' combination of helpless vacillation and religious obduracy in matters of government, Alexandra's terror of the Russian court—with a fine balance between the nuances of character in script and performances and the sumptuous interior landscapes, quickly and unobtrusively established. Political events, oppression and revolutionary fervour swirl noisily but vaguely in the background, composed in brief, formal, expressive scenes where black, crowded bodies and mass excitement seethe through coolly monumental interiors, through the chamber of the Duma and in the working hovels of St. Petersburg, culminating in the Bloody Sunday massacre which Schaffner handles with characteristic flair, communicating a confusion and terror that eluded the indirect treatment of Cossack slaughter in *Dr. Zhivago*.

The problems begin with the introduction of the revolutionaries, and the necessity of conveying to some extent the content and meaning of their struggle. Here the script settles for a broadly caricatured, *Lion in Winter* view of the cut and thrust of personal antagonism and political advantage-seeking. The treatment of actual situations and historical events is greatly simplified—Nicholas' summary of the Balkan situation to his family in the middle of the night seems to come as close to deliberate self-parody as the mocking political catechisms of Anthony Harvey's film. Most of the antagonisms on this plane hum round terse epigrams on the necessity of seizing and holding power. Thus, despite some minor subtleties of characterisation (Lenin comes across as a nervous storehouse of intransigence) a kind of bland, unreflective identification is gradually formed between figures as disparate as Lenin and Kerensky.

The saddest failure though is Schaffner's inability to find a real centre for the film, and so achieve the kind of precarious constellation of forces that has formed round his protagonists in

the past. Patton, poised at just the right moment in history, in precisely the right place, and overwhelmed with the sense of this moment being 'like a planet, spinning off into the Universe', or the upheaval wrought by a Norman warlord, subverted by the ways of the 'marsh rabbits' he is sent to rule, are worlds away from the vague, shifting portrait at the centre of *Nicholas and Alexandra*. Ultimately, the film affords no grounds for affirming or denying Yakovlev's, and history's, final summation of Nicholas: 'You're not "Bloody Nicholas"! You're a man of no imagination.'

RICHARD COMBS

What's the Matter with Helen?

More than six years after *Baby Jane* and *Sweet Charlotte*, Aldrich's early exercises in nostalgic Grand Guignol, half horror film, half camp tribute to a decaying Hollywood, Curtis Harrington's *What's the Matter with Helen?* (United Artists) revives the formula with unexpected flair and style. *Helen* gets more mileage than either of its predecessors (leaving the 1969 Aldrich-produced *Whatever Happened to Aunt Alice?* out of the running, since it lacks the idiosyncratic Hollywood elements) from a genre that in Aldrich's hands seemed too narcissistic—too jokey, allusive and self-consciously lurid—to develop as an interesting branch of the horror film.

The story-line conforms to type. Two women, who have fled to Hollywood to escape the publicity of a Leopold-Loeb-type murder trial involving their sons, are pursued by sinister reminders of the past, 'phone calls, letters and intruders, until one finally cracks up and takes revenge on her companion. One conspicuous gain over the Aldrich films is that *Baby Jane* writer Henry Farrell has set his story not in some never-never post-Hollywood depression, with Bette Davis as an ageing child star on the rampage, but at the height of the dream era itself. A glimpse of a cinema advertising *The Black Cat* not only dates the story (circa 1934) but reminds us that the early 1930s were the heyday of Karloff and Lugosi as well as Harlow and Temple. On a purely visual level, this polarity provides fascinating alternations between the silver, soft-focus and Art Deco of the 1930s Hollywood dream (Lucien Ballard was Stern-

berg's photographer on *Morocco*) and the cloak-and-shadow of contemporary Gothic (Michael MacLiammóir's caped, portly and sinister presence clearly invoking Lugosi).

Harrington's liberal strewing of red herrings has the advantage of focusing our attention on every exotic character and scene (only in retrospect do nearly all emerge as peripheral or irrelevant) and the film is packed with fleeting tributes to the period: tango on a luxury yacht, an Amy Semple MacPherson hot gossip ('I offered you my blessing, but you refused it. Now move on.'). even a Tod Browning dwarf. When the heroines' flight to Hollywood ends in their founding a talent school for aspiring Shirley Temples, the stage is set for a horrific 'Kiddy-stars Revue', which features a Busby Berkeley staging of 'Animal Crackers' on a giant soup bowl, a Mae West number delivered with sultry panache by an 8-year-old and a glittering stars-and-stripes finale in front of a huge eagle surmounted by the initials N.R.A.

The wonder is that Harrington keeps the plot going amid all the bric-à-brac. But as he showed in *Games*, he has an ability to create tension without elaborate preparation. A judicious use of time-honoured thriller devices—overhead shots of characters mounting stairs, a Hitchcock-like crane shot that twice lifts us from a shot of Adelle and Lincoln necking in a car to a close-up of Helen staring vindictively from the window—turns on the suspense before we are effectively aware that anything is wrong. And although Farrell's story seems thin and meandering in retrospect, individual scenes are invariably well-staged (Harrington knows that conversations on stairways carry an extra menace) and the plot is unified by the striking use of recurrent images (dolls, mirror, scissors, the life-size cut-out Adelle). Hitchcock is the name that continually comes to mind, not because Harrington has produced a slavish pastiche, but because he knows how to unsettle an audience by purely filmic means. It remains to be seen what he could do with more ambitious material. Meanwhile, *What's the Matter with Helen?* provides considerable pleasure—not least in the performances of Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters as the heroines, and Michael MacLiammóir's scene-stealing, histrionically sinister drama teacher, purring Wildean epigrams and fulsomely introducing himself as 'Hamilton Starr. Two Rs, but prophetic nonetheless.'

NIGEL ANDREWS

London Festival 1971

from page 35

The race is never concluded, not just because it loses such point as it had once the drivers discover an almost fraternal solidarity in their endurance of fatigue and Southern hostility, but because the boys in the Chevy are incapable of passing up any lesser challenge they meet on the road. The final shot is of celluloid burning itself up; and if the film works well enough as a metaphor for the purposelessness of competitive activity, a warning on the dangers of object-worship, and a description of the mean cultural prospects of small-town America, it's less happy as a symbolic confrontation between Young Drop-Out and Middle-Class Consumer, since the latter is characterised as a pathological liar.

Even stranger is the casting of a *Psychotically* twitching Anthony Perkins as the Last Hope for Christian Virtue in Stuart Rosenberg's miscalculated *WUSA* (Paramount). The principal characters are a ragbag assortment of drifters, failures and con-men, mak-

ing a desperate bid for stability and survival in a contemporary New Orleans beset by a virulent right-wing backlash. The sensitive stumble and founder (Joanne Woodward, as a woman living off her faded charms and doomed to exploitation, hangs herself in her cell after being caught with her neighbours' marijuana—another victim of police brutality; Perkins is kicked to death after shooting the wrong man at a right-wing rally). Only the unfeeling rhetoricians survive—Laurence Harvey's unlikely revivalist minister, and Paul Newman as the politicians' cynical mouthpiece. The film's plea for moderation and its indictment of a witch-hunting patriotism are unquestionably sincere; but its presentation of rioting crowds, corrupt political manipulators and exploitative black landlords is so ineptly clichéd as to render its message more numbing than conscience-stirring. The fall of the great or the virtuous may be tragic, but the extinction of the already fallen makes only for spectacle.

Easily the most interesting of the films is *Roller Derby* (Cinerama), a *cinéma-vérité* documentary about an indigenous sport

which combines the hazards of roller racing and all-in wrestling. As well as showing up the gladiatorial aspect (crowds yelling for blood as an amazing Amazon called Venus pulls out a rival's hair by the roots), director Robert Kaylor situates his subject geographically and sociologically by following Mike Snell, a married, 23-year-old factory worker who is scheming to leave his job and train for Roller Derby stardom. The sport is shown to be pointless, violent, even grotesque, but is then shown to offer one of the few escape routes still open to the working-class boy with ambitions. As Mike does the rounds, moving from the factory bench, to his pokey rented bungalow, to the loan company, to a night with the boys at a third-rate burlesque show, Kaylor forces home the realisation of just how impoverished his alternatives are. If Mike Snell emerges as the most effective symbol of America's newfound despair, it is precisely because Kaylor, less ambitious than the directors working in fictional forms, is content to establish his reality.

JAN DAWSON

BOOK REVIEWS

STANLEY KUBRICK DIRECTS

By Alexander Walker

HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVICH,
NEW YORK, \$8.95

Stanley Kubrick's career is highly unusual for an American in that he became a movie director without any previous experience of, or involvement in, show business and without serving any industrial apprenticeship. A short useful period as a photo-journalist on *Look* and a couple of brief documentaries in the *March of Time* manner (which he sold to RKO) led to two independently produced low-budget films, partly financed by wealthy relatives, and thence to the prodigiously accomplished thriller *The Killing* (1956), which both made his name and established his complete mastery of the craft. (During the making of it he apparently fought and won battles with his cinematographer, who was no less than Lucien Ballard.) *Paths of Glory* fulfilled the great expectations that *The Killing* had created. Appearing at the same time as *Bridge on the River Kwai*, it represented the positive aspect of what Kubrick's admirers thought the cinema should be, to *Kwai*'s deadening negative.

Kubrick stood apart, and in retrospect stands even further apart, from most of his contemporaries who had moved on to Hollywood from the short-lived New York live TV drama boom. He seemed to be an intellectual who'd turned to movies instead of fiction. As Alexander Walker tells us in his valuable monograph, Kubrick while working as a journalist and tyro film-maker was compensating for his decision to forgo full-time higher education by monitoring courses at Columbia (the university not the studio) given by, among others, Lionel Trilling, Mark Van Doren and Moses Hadas. This is the background of the younger Jewish intellectuals of his day who became novelists, critics and magazine editors.

No surer sign of where he stood in the late 1950s can be found than in an essay by Dwight Macdonald, describing his belated first visit to Hollywood ('No Art and No Box Office', *Encounter*, July 1959). Needless to say Macdonald didn't like the movie colony, and mercifully sent up the cultural aspirations and affectations of everyone he met from Dore Schary to Jerry Wald. With a single excep-

tion: 'I spent an interesting three hours with Stanley Kubrick . . . discussing Whitehead, Kafka, *Potemkin*, Zen Buddhism, the decline of Western culture, and whether life is worth living anywhere except at the extremes—religious faith or the life of the senses; it was a typical New York conversation.'

At that point no doubt Kubrick was in danger of being assimilated into Hollywood, of becoming the Joe Mankiewicz of the new generation. But his dissatisfaction with his circumscribed role on *Spartacus* (the one picture he totally disowns) and, perhaps more crucially, his early departure from *One-Eyed Jacks*, strengthened his resolve to control his work in a radical fashion rather than adapt himself to the prevailing system. Since then he has made four long-gestating, deeply studied pictures in British exile: *Lolita*, *Dr. Strangelove*, 2001 and the forthcoming *A Clockwork Orange*. With *Strangelove* and 2001 Kubrick struck a receptive nerve at just the right time for critical and popular success. There's something about his pictures that has enabled him to combine the budgets of a DeMille with the quirky individuality of a Buñuel.

The dustjacket of Walker's book is somewhat misleading. First the title suggests that Kubrick is directing Alexander Walker, whereas the text reveals that he has merely co-operated closely with a great admirer. Secondly, there's a photograph of a coarsely bearded, intense young man which might lead the uninformed observer (an average citizen of Jupiter, perhaps) to infer that it was a portrait not of a movie director but of a theologian pondering the meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls or an anxious reform rabbi worrying about the correct form of service for his new Long Island synagogue. The design on the actual book, however, takes us right to the heart of the matter: a three-dimensional chess-board tapering off pyramid fashion to meet at some hazy infinity. This motif expresses perfectly Walker's view of Kubrick (and perhaps Kubrick's notion of himself) as a chess-master pursuing logical patterns until they transcend reason and enter a realm of madness, myth or magic.

Drawing on a close knowledge of the man and his work, Walker's book is an interim report on one of the most important post-war movie careers, and analyses the

way each of Kubrick's pictures is consciously built up from an initial concept to an achieved work through the discovery of an appropriate style. There's a general absence of woolly theorising; only where recurrent themes and pre-occupations are manifest (e.g. the 'perfect' plan that goes wrong, the man v. machine/system situation, the oppression of time, the inexorability of fate, etc.) does Walker press them upon us. His discussions are closely related to the illustrations, mostly didactically arranged (and rather fuzzy) frame enlargements which serve to take the book off the coffee table and place it firmly on the study desk. Students will find *Stanley Kubrick Directs* of great value for the exact account of the relationship between Kubrick's mind and its cinematic expression that is provided in Walker's precise description of sequences, in Kubrick's statements about his work and in comments on the technical equipment he's used over the years.

My criticisms of the book are of a fairly minor order. I miss a chapter placing Kubrick in a larger social and historical context, and leading on from this I have a feeling that for all the claims the author quite rightly makes for his subject's uniqueness and individuality, he never quite confronts the bizarre, eccentric, obsessional quality in Kubrick's personality and art. Another reservation is that with a film-maker who has inspired such a diverse body of critical writing, a bibliography would have been useful. It is to be hoped that Walker will include one when he brings out a British edition or a revised version of the present American one to cover *A Clockwork Orange*.

PHILIP FRENCH

GARBO AND THE NIGHT WATCHMEN

Assembled and edited by
Alistair Cooke

SECKER AND WARBURG, £3.50

In the perspective of thirty years or more, a few films—a very few—are timeless, some are period, and some merely dated. Is it the same, one wonders, with film criticism; or is that to elevate the craft of criticism too far, hopefully, in the direction of art? Anyway, the re-issue of Alistair Cooke's classic anthology of 1937 gives us a chance to check on how, if at all, the film criticism of the 1930s stands up today. Timeless, period, or dated?

Of course it is all in a sense period. There is inevitably a whole nostalgia thing going for the book—especially as now admirably illustrated to remind us (could anyone forget?) how Kay Francis, Warner Oland and Elissa Landi looked. The overall image presented by the book is indeed rather reassuring. It is a bit reminiscent, at its most critical, of Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, in that the writers are constantly inveighing against the horrors of

things as they are, as compared with how they used to be, while for us the horrors—I found *Stella Parish*, *Rose of the Rancho*, *The Scoundrel*, or in Orwell's case *Black and White* milk bars and vulgar supercinemas—have already acquired their own period charm, their status as a confident good from which we have since declined further into faceless nonentity.

But that sort of elementary camp is only part of the book's interest: just as well, since it would hardly be sufficient by itself to warrant a reissue. For some of the critics still remain very good indeed, and even those who have hardly stood the test of time are far from unreadable. It is easy, and obvious, to fall in love with Cecelia Ager, the lady who wrote for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* and reviewed everything, very properly, in terms of the leading lady's wardrobe.

Actually, this is not so frivolous a way of proceeding as it seems, since the star image and its presentation were after all central to Hollywood film-making and are therefore as correctly a subject of critical study as anything else. Also, the clothes and make-up do often stand rather well, in a quasi-symbolic fashion, for other elements in the films which Miss Ager apparently leaves untouched. The only review which really shows up the limitations of her approach is the required piece on *Modern Times*, which is given a section to itself at the end with the comments of all the critics concerned. *Modern Times*, whatever one may think of it, is a film one just cannot write about primarily in terms of Paulette Goddard and the style with which she carries her tatters.

If Cecelia Ager is period (nobody writes reviews like that any more, just as nobody makes films like most of those she reviews; and in both cases it seems rather a pity), Robert Forsythe (alias Kyle Crichton) is the most obviously dated of the critics. He is the Marxist of the bunch, and a Marxist of a particularly naïve, Thirtyish kind, judging every film in political blacks and whites. Sometimes the effect is decidedly ludicrous, as when John Cromwell's no doubt basely silly film version of Charles Morgan's loftily silly novel *The Fountain* is taken as the text for a swingeing attack on the British 'upper class'. Possibly he is right about both the British and the film, but the link-up is somehow defective. The film is evidently too slight a basis for the political judgments drawn from it, while to use all this anglophobia to savage the film seems very much like taking a sledgehammer to crack a peanut.

Some tics are common to all the critics. Reverence for Chaplin is almost though not quite universal; nearly everybody is against Hollywood (apart from Cecelia Ager), and tends to measure the success of an American film in terms of its deviation from what is seen as the Hollywood norm. All the

A Discovery of Cinema

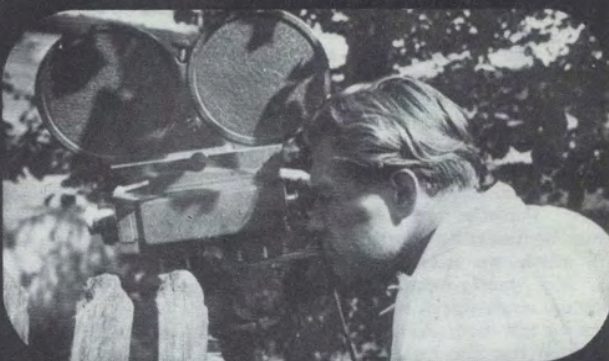
Thorold Dickinson

'It is the best brief account I have yet read of what movies are, where they are today and how they got there. He writes with a filmmaker's knowledge of nuts and bolts (or of emulsions and aspect ratios) and an inspired scholar's historical perspective, but also with plain common sense which is not necessarily common to either . . . Dickinson the author is at heart Dickinson the filmmaker, whose principal concern . . . is to give us his view of what, out of the peculiar historical mix of technology, world events and the legacy of genius, his fellow filmmakers have been enabled to do . . . "Attempts at money-making with moronic old formulae as a sole reference," Dickinson says, "can only effect certain death for cinema, because—as these ideas do not now make money—commerce will withdraw from film-making on any scale . . . The abiding problem is to reconcile the conformist needs of commerce with the assets which only the nonconformists can provide" . . . lucid and invaluable book . . .—Charles Champlin in *The Los Angeles Times*

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critics, British and American, are far more outspoken than our libel lawyers would let us be today, at least in this country. Which of us would be permitted, with Meyer Levin, to 'single out with loathing such butter-faced boys as Richard Cromwell and Dickie Powell as among the weakest representations of manhood to be found on the screen'? The almost universal liberalism of the writers is unselfconsciously scattered with prejudices of race, religion and such (Robert Forsythe also flatly equates homosexuality with fascism) which we would be too mild and mealy-mouthed, or merely too circumspect, to express even if we felt them. Also, on the assumption that the reviews contained in this book are reprinted complete (those I have had occasion to check consistently, the Graham Greene ones, certainly are), critics in those days felt considerably less duty merely to inform their readers—on what the films were about, who directed them, and so on—than we do. Even when the judgment seems sound enough, the documentary evidence for it, and to enable us to read round it, is often lacking.

And how much of the book, if any, is timeless? It seems to me that the only critic contained in it whose angle of approach and style of writing would be quite unexceptional, and unexceptionable,

today is Robert Herring. Alistair Cooke too has his moments, particularly when appearing as a general observer rather than a critic of particular films: now and then one picks up with delight the sort of sharply phrased judgment on life or art which, as a broadcaster, he still regularly delivers. Then again there is Graham Greene, who is a special case. I think that he was a very good, though inevitably quirky, critic. Here he is represented by some of his good, but none of quite his best criticism. (That came just too late, mostly in *Night and Day*, every piece of which is marvelous.)

But by and large, it must be admitted, *Garbo and the Night Watchmen* is surprising in its staying power; owing no doubt quite a bit to Alistair Cooke's editorial flair. 1930s film criticism seems in its pages remarkably fresh and immediate—almost as much so as the films it concerned itself with. I wonder how an equivalent book showing off nine of us at our best now would look in 2005.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

The Film Criticism of Otis Ferguson, edited by Robert Wilson (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, \$12.50). The collected

film reviews of Otis Ferguson, *New Republic* critic of the 1930s, killed in 1943 while serving in the U.S. merchant navy. Andrew Sarris, in a foreword, stakes a claim for Ferguson as 'the writer of the best and most subtly influential film criticism ever turned out in America,' disregarded by comparison with Agee because the latter 'was blessed with the kind of bookish credentials that enabled the trolls and Trillings of the literary establishment to hail him as the one and only compleat film critic.' Ferguson is one of the team in *Garbo and the Night Watchmen*, but stands out more as solo performer in this long (450-page) volume, an extended reminder of the energy, insights, off-hand humour, tough-mindedness and newspaper professionalism of star 1930s reviewing, when Hollywood was still the centre of the world. Ends with Ferguson's 1941 reportage on his trip to 'The Promissory Land' itself; and that ends with an appeal for a complete financial shake-up which would 'give the movies back to the people who make them.' Thirty years on...

Magic and Myth of the Movies, by Parker Tyler (Secker and Warburg, £2.95). First British edition of Parker Tyler's 1947 collection of articles, the book that obsessed Myra Breckinridge and the third

Tyler volume to be published here in the last few months. Erratic, stylistically cluttered, frequently rich mining of the loaded reef of American 1940s cinema, with the critic as lone prospector digging Freudian nuggets from *Arsenic and Old Lace* to *Mildred Pierce* by way of Betty Hutton. This edition opens with a new introduction in which Mr. Tyler refers (justly) to the 'baroque complication and casual obscurity' of his own style; mumbles somewhat about his Myra Breckinridge role; and notes with satisfaction that Penelope Gilliatt once referred to him in print as 'the American psychiatrist'.

The Tale of the Tales, by Rumer Godden (Warne, £4.00). Lavish, expensive, engaging piece of book-making, in the wake of all the Beatrix Potter enthusiasm disclosed or unleashed by the Ashton ballet film. Glowing, if factually somewhat frail, text by Rumer Godden about the team enterprise behind the movie, prettily supported by designer's sketches, colour stills, and reminders of the originals. Authentic Potter bonus at the end in the form of extracts from the correspondence of Jeremy Fisher, Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and a disconsolately tailless Squirrel Nutkin ('I miss it very much. I would pay postage').

P. H.

Letters

British Film History

SIR,—In her *History of the British Film 1918–1929*, Dr. Rachael Low confirms the difficulty in assessing the merits of films when so many are just not available to see; but she appears to fall somewhat into this trap at times. She describes J. Stuart Blackton's films of the early 1920s as 'monumentally dull'—a judgment probably based on a viewing of *The Glorious Adventure*. I have seen the final sequences of Blackton's *A Gypsy Cavalier* (1922) and—admittedly after a slow start—they build to a most suspenseful climax, with Flora le Breton coming within inches of drowning in a coach stuck in the middle of a raging torrent.

Pioneer producer G. B. Samuelson comes off particularly badly. One or two minor additions can be made to Dr. Low's account. Besides Rex (not Frank) Wilson and Albert Ward, Samuelson had as directors during the period Alexander Butler, Fred Durrant, Fred Paul and Walter Summers; and in addition to Sydney Blythe he had cameramen James Rogers and Alf Tunwell. Rogers usually

worked on the Albert Ward films, but on larger productions like *The Game of Life* (1921–22)—directed by Samuelson himself—at least two cameramen were used.

General Film Renters ceased to handle Samuelson films after May 1921 because Samuelson suspended production at Worton Hall, where he was working on *The Game of Life*, and went into the transport business, until this venture was wound up early in 1922. In March 1922 he returned to Worton Hall, and formed a new company with Sir William Jury called 'British Super Films', releasing through Jury's Imperial Pictures. There can be no doubt that the 'unstable' financial position in which Samuelson found himself was largely due to the money he lost in the transport concern.

Dr. Low's attribution of the 'deplorable' *Land of Hope and Glory* (1927) to Samuelson is highly dubious. It was a 'Napoleon' film, but Samuelson left this company in 1925 (he had formed it with S. W. Smith in 1922). Advertisements of the film in trade journals of 1927 name Smith as the producer, and make no mention of Samuelson—a most unlikely omission if he had produced the film.

On the failure of Samuelson's company formed in 1926 to make *If Youth But Knew*, Dr. Low writes: 'Its failure was innocently attributed by Samuelson himself to "less successful production", expenses due to an accident...

But it is no use operating on a shoestring if you are prone to accidents.' The comment is (unwittingly, I am sure) uncharitable, since the 'accident' was a car accident resulting in personal injuries to Samuelson—something which could not possibly be foreseen and provided against.

Dr. Low's regret for Samuelson's 'preference for High Society' because 'few of his company looked the part' is hard to understand, since the company included Owen Nares, Isobel Elsom, Ruby Miller, Madge Titheradge, Daisy Burrell, Malcolm Cherry, Henry Vibart and Maudie Dunham, all with great experience in just this type of part.

She (1925) comes in for particularly damning criticism. Baynam Honri tells me that it was not one of Samuelson's best films. Even so, I would not say that Betty Blythe's performance was 'absurd over-acting', nor that the film is 'incredibly' slow. I think it can still be seen with some pleasure, among other things for the charm of Mary Odette, and the merit that it keeps strictly to Rider Haggard's story.

Samuelson of all people is difficult to evaluate because of the lack of film material. It may well be that his best work was done before or at the start of the period. It would be fascinating to see his *Milestones* (1916), very highly praised at the time; or his *The Elder Miss Blossom* (1918), which Desmond Dickinson tells me was a tremendous hit when British

films 'stank'. Film renters have told me that in the early days Samuelson's 'S' trademark was a guarantee of quality.

Dr. Low's necessarily academic approach tends to obscure the human side of the story. Certainly Samuelson became one of the smaller producers who were pushed to the wall as films became 'big business'. But surely the courage and resilience of these men deserves recognition. Samuelson's ability is attested by Desmond Dickinson, who worked with him on quota films in the early Thirties, and told me 'he could have directed anything'. Dallas Bower, who was his sound technician at the same period, testifies that he worked with amazing enthusiasm, speed and complete certainty and efficiency. But perhaps above all, those who worked with him recall with affection his simplicity, kindness and innocence of character. Indeed, they speak of him somewhat as American pioneers talk of Griffith. He seems to have inspired their love, and this is surely not a bad 'final verdict' on Samuelson.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD DUNHAM

Enfield, Middlesex.

Twenty-Four Times a Second

SIR,—I wonder if I might be permitted to take the occasion of Mr. Perez-Guillermo's generous review of my book to call attention to an important typographical error in it which relates to some of the issues the review raises. On

page 39, what now reads, 'I believe that when a first-rate film criticism comes to be written (as the work of Robert Warshaw decisively shows) it will be based not on a cultivated technical sophistication, but on the incorporation of such special knowledge within the basic framework of a first-rate criticism of any of the arts,' should read: '... the incorporation of such special knowledge within the basic framework of a first-rate intelligence; not different, in short, from a first-rate criticism of any of the arts.' The point seems to me all the more worth insisting on in view of things like Philip French's admiring quotation of such gibberish as Manny Farber on 'negative space'. Though I would think here was a case where one might not need to invoke models of sense (and syntax) from art criticism, given discussions of the use of space in films as intelligent as those by Mr. Perez-Guillermo, writing on Murnau in *SIGHT AND SOUND* and elsewhere.

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM S. PECHTER
San Francisco.

Deep End

SIR,—Is there really no way in which film-makers can protect themselves against the misguided attempts of distributors and cinema

managers to draw the crowds by cheapening and falsifying the content and quality of their films? This is a perennial complaint, I know, and we all treasure our favourite examples of title changes and lurid publicity. The instance which specifically prompted this letter was the doubtful tribute paid to Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End* of being 'the naughty film of the year'. That is the way this excellent film was advertised by the Cinephone, Manchester.

The trouble with this kind of advertising is that it misleads all the public, whatever sort of film they're looking for; the person who would appreciate and enjoy a well-made and intelligent film might be put off from seeing it, while the skin-flick addict will see it and presumably be bitterly disappointed. Moreover, publicity of this kind, which is reserved mainly for continental films, probably helps to confirm the conviction, still held by some people, that the continental cinema is synonymous with 'all those sex films'.

The same Manchester cinema, incidentally, had for its next presentation Claude Chabrol's *Les Biches*. Fine. But coupled with it was something entitled *The Sinning Urge*.

Yours faithfully,
C. MCCURRY
Stockport, Cheshire.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-WARNER for *Drive, He Said, Gumshoe, Traffic, Andrei Rublev*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *WUSA, A New Leaf, Psycho, Miracle of Morgan's Creek*.
PARAMOUNT/DESILU for *The Fountain of Youth*.
MGM-EMI for *Family Life*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Walkabout, The Egyptian*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Bat Whispers*.
RKO-RADIO PICTURES for *Citizen Kane, On Dangerous Ground*.
CINERAMA for *Kotch, Straw Dogs*.
RANK FILM DISTRIBUTION for *Fahrenheit 451*.
RANK/UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *The Hired Hand*.
CONNOISSEUR FILMS for *Black God, White Devil*.
ABC/CINERAMA for *The Touch*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Days and Nights in the Forest, La Jettée*.
VAUGHAN FILMS for *Trash, The Moon and the Sledgehammer*.
PLANET FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *La Voie Lactée*.
UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Silent Running, Frenzy*.
ITC for *Madame Sin*.
HAWK FILMS for *A Clockwork Orange*.
BBS PRODUCTIONS for *A Safe Place*.
HUNGAROFILM/ACADEMY for *Agnus Dei*.
FILMS LA BOETIE for *La Décade Prodigieuse*.
VICTORIA FILMS/ALBINA/DEL'ORSO for *Four Nights of a Dreamer*.
DAIEI for *Sansho Dayu*.
ATLANTIC PRODUCTIONS/KOSUTN/JACK FILMSKI YUGOSLAVIA for *England Made Me*.
ICAIC for *Days of Water*.
REGGANE FILMS/TELEPRESSE FILMS for *Blanche*.

JOSEPH SHAFTEL PRODUCTIONS/CIAC for *The Assassination of Trotsky*.
CHRIS MENGES for photograph of *Albert Dieudonné*.
BARRY SHEFFIELD for photographs from *I Racconti di Canterbury* at Coggeshall.
GEORGE C. STONEY for photographs for 'The Mirror Machine'.
PETER DE ROME for *Fire Island Kids*.
NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA for *Challenge for Change*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Twentieth Century, Citizen Kane* (still of Xanadu taken from the frame by J. J. McCloskey.)

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TED GILLING is a Canadian who has lived in London since 1964. Was formerly production columnist for *Today's Cinema*, and has worked as publicist on a number of films, including *The Lion in Winter, The Music Lovers*, and Joseph Janni's new production *Made*. He has written two film scripts and is researching a third...
DEREK HILL

runs the New Cinema Club; was formerly a film critic (*Tribune*, etc), and originated the Short Film Service...
GEORGE C. STONEY is director of the Alternate Media Center at New York University. Documentary director (*All My Babies*, etc.) and until recently executive producer for the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change programme...
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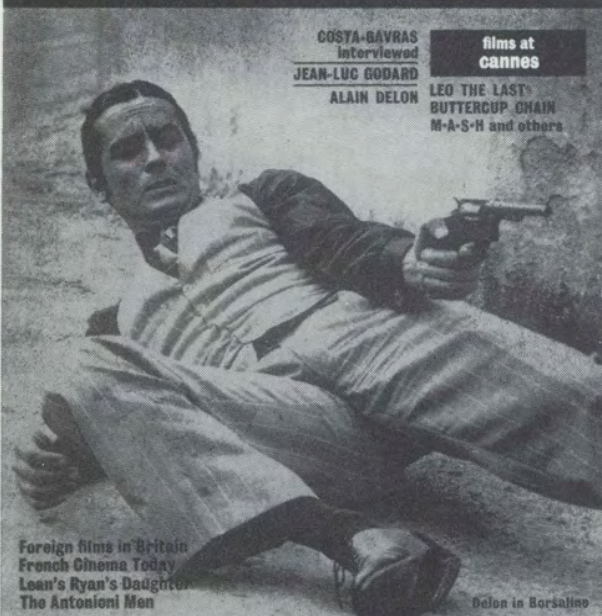
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FILM GUIDE

ANDERSON TAPES, THE (Columbia-Warner)

The criminal as victim of the electronics age in a downbeat thriller about a grandiose scheme to rob a New York apartment block. The crooks are all bugged; but the only one not tuned in is Sidney Lumet, whose moody, fragmented direction muffles the tension and undercuts the theme of privacy made public. (Sean Connery, Martin Balsam, Ralph Meeker.)

BLOOMFIELD (Fox)

Richard Harris, this time as actor and director, returns to the football field as a tired player stuck with an arty mistress (Romy Schneider) and a young boy admirer. Some sensitive scenes buried beneath frenetic direction, taking in everything from Lelouch slow motion to bizarre Wellesian under-the-table shots.

*CLOCKWORK ORANGE, A (Columbia-Warner)

Kubrick's ingenious, inventive, exuberant adaptation of Anthony Burgess' barely futuristic fantasy about teenage violence and the dire effects of punishment aversion therapy. Should put tolchoked and horrorshow into the language. (Malcolm McDowell.) Reviewed.

*CONFORMIST, THE (Curzon)

Bertolucci's crystalline dissection of the anatomy of conformity, brilliantly evocative of the spider's web intrigue of pre-war Fascist Italy. A superbly realised demonstration of private guilt as the mainspring of public acquiescence. (Jean-Louis Trintignant, Dominique Sanda.)

*DOC (United Artists)

Apart from the opening scene and Stacy Keach's performance as Doc Holliday, little feeling for the Western in this half-hearted attempt to retell the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral from the viewpoint that Wyatt Earp was a double-dyed villain. The various attempts at significance are rather embarrassing. (Faye Dunaway, Harris Yulin; director, Frank Perry.)

*DRIVE, HE SAID (Columbia-Warner)

Restrained and disturbing first feature from Jack Nicholson, charting the painful steps towards self-consciousness of an extrovert basketball player reluctant to choose between athletics and eccentricity. Karen Black superb as a professor's wife indulging in a guilty affair, and the film gains by not spelling out its levels of allegory. (William Tepper, Michael Margotta.)

*FAMILY LIFE (MGM-EMI)

Ken Loach's adaptation of David Mercer's television play about the making of a schizophrenic. Laingian in its concept of environment as the cause of mental illness; and depressingly convincing, despite some doubts about special pleading. (Sandy Ratcliff, Bill Dean, Grace Cave.) Reviewed.

*FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES (MGM-EMI)

Handsome teenager, jailed for a drug offence, becomes an object of interest and assault to hungry homosexuals and sex-starved inmates. Well acted, neatly adapted from John Herbert's play, but

falling between the two stools of sensational exposé and serious protest about prison conditions. (Wendell Burton, Michael Greer, Zooey Hall; director, Harvey Hart.)

GRISSOM GANG, THE (Cinerama)

Robert Aldrich's slick version of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, about the Depression era kidnapping of a Kansas City socialite. Distant and unflattering echoes of *Bloody Mama* in a fashionable blend of camp, violence and synthetic nostalgia. (Kim Darby, Scott Wilson, Tony Musante.)

*GUMSHOE (Columbia-Warner)

Sympathetic first feature, witty and nostalgic, from young British director Stephen Frears. Albert Finney plays a Bogart-fixated North-country bingo-caller whose private eye fantasies of guns and gangsters unexpectedly materialise and follow him all the way to the Labour Exchange. (Billie Whitelaw, Janice Rule.) Reviewed.

HANNIE CAULDER (Tigon)

Camped-up revenge Western which makes a half-hearted attempt to revive the 'clad-only' genre, with Raquel Welch wrapping a blanket around her and setting out to hunt down the trio of baddies who've shot her husband and treated her to a tastelessly slapstick gang-bang. (Robert Culp, Ernest Borgnine.)

*HELLSTROM CHRONICLE, THE (Fox)

Engrossing close-up view of the insect world, superbly photographed and packed with alarming facts and figures. Marred by a buttonholing commentary and an ubiquitous entomologist, as though the pictures weren't enough to persuade us that the insects have a better chance than we do. (Director, Walon Green.)

HIRED HAND, THE (Rank)

Peter Fonda's indulgent first feature (all arty superimpositions and charismatic profiles) about a saddle-sore Ulysses briefly reconciled with his understandably unfaithful wife and eventually martyred for preferring male loyalties to family life. (Peter Fonda, Warren Oates, Verna Bloom.) Reviewed.

*LAST RUN, THE (MGM-EMI)

Sven Nykvist's superb photography and George C. Scott's impeccable performance as a retired getaway driver making a last-ditch stand against his own obsolescence amply compensate for Alan Sharp's tiresomely explicit script. Richard Fleischer directs the action sequences with more conviction than he does the significant speeches. (Tony Musante, Trish Van Devere.)

LIONS LOVE (Contemporary)

Agnes Varda meets the Hollywood drop-outs. The authors of *Hair* and superstar Viva take Shirley Clarke into their luxury apartment, and everybody talks and talks while Miss Clarke tries to set up a movie about the place. Irritating display of prettified exhibitionism. (Jim Rado, Jerome Gagni.)

*MARRIAGE OF A YOUNG STOCKBROKER, THE (Fox)

Produced by Lawrence Turman (*The Graduate*), from a novel by Charles Webb (*The Graduate*), and trying—surprise, surprise—to be *Son of The Graduate*. Richard Benjamin funny throughout, but the theme (dropping out of the stock exchange to rediscover the real values) is hit with the delicacy of a sledgehammer. (Joanna Shimkus, Elizabeth Ashley; director, Lawrence Turman.)

*NEW LEAF, A (Paramount)

Walter Matthau in splendid form as a pampered playboy forced to marry wealth in order to keep himself in the style to which he is accustomed. Elaine May almost as good as the absentmindedly frumpish botanist whom he never quite manages to murder and who finally turns him into a reluctant St.

Bernard. Her direction, though, is erratic. (George Rose, Jack Weston.) Reviewed.

*NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA (Columbia-Warner)

The fall of the House of Romanov, meticulously documented in Sam Spiegel's intimate epic as a family affair revolving round the weakling Tsarevich. A long slog through scattered pages of history, painstakingly marshalled by Franklin Schaffner, who disappointingly keeps his distance. (Michael Jayston, Janet Suzman.) Reviewed.

PLEASE SIR! (Rank)

Another television comedy series expanded for the big screen, this one about London secondary school kids let loose on a country holiday camp. Mischief ensues, predictably and at length; no marks for comic invention. (John Alderton, Deryck Guyler; director, Mark Stuart.)

PRETTY MAIDS ALL IN A ROW (MGM-EMI)

Vadim in Hollywood with a high school comedy thriller which misfires on all cylinders. An unhappy mélange of sex, satire and snigger; marginal relief from Rock Hudson, Angie Dickinson and Keenan Wynn, who play the game with more spirit than it deserves.

*RED BARON, THE (United Artists)

Roger Corman's accomplished, characteristically idiosyncratic but uneven look at aerial combat in the Great War, centred on the conflict between honour and expediency in the personalities of doomed aristocrat von Richthofen and Canadian farmer Brown. Superb aerial sequences; less sure on the ground. (John Phillip Law, Don Stroud.)

RED SKY AT MORNING (Rank)

Set in 1944 and mainly about the problems of adolescence, but with odd injections of patriotism (Daddy is off to war), Tennessee Williams (Mummy, played by Claire Bloom, is a budding Blanche Dubois), *Rebel Without a Cause*, and much preaching about racial tolerance. There are moments. (Richard Thomas, Catherine Burns, Richard Crenna; director, James Goldstone.)

SECRETS (Satori)

A day in the life of a young London family and their various encounters with strangers who leave them sadder but wiser. Glossy, nervously complacent slice of magazine romance; and as the first Super-16 feature it would hardly pass an hour on television. (Jacqueline Bisset, Per Oscarsson, Shirley Knight Hopkins; director, Philip Saville.)

SEVEN MINUTES, THE (Fox)

Russ Meyer's latest two-faced look at America's two-faced morality, happily exploiting the sex, violence and chauvinism it purports to denounce. If you're prepared to make a virtue of vulgarity, it's worth watching for skilful type-casting and for Yvonne De Carlo's old-style Hollywood performance as an old-style Hollywood star. (Wayne Maunder, Marianne McAndrew, Edy Williams.)

*SHAFT (MGM-EMI)

Straightforward but stylishly enjoyable private eye thriller, with new wine put into old bottles by a black director, black cast, and Harlem locations. As engagingly untroubled by black panthers or liberal watchdogs as *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, but with a much stronger narrative sense. Richard Roundtree outstandingly good in the Bogart part. (Moses Gunn, Christopher St. John; director, Gordon Parks.)

*SOIR... UN TRAIN, UN (Fox)

Intriguing but flawed essay in time and memory from the director of

The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short, about a smug Flemish professor whose encounters in a hallucinatory wasteland of the mind reveal intimations of mortality for himself and the lover he has neglected. An allusive, opaque centre crushed by layers of transparent symbolism. (Yves Montand, Anouk Aimée; director, André Delvaux.)

*STRAW DOGS (Cinerama)

Horror in a Cornish village when an American academic and his English wife find themselves inextricably involved in a spiral of violence. Sam Peckinpah meticulously sets the scene, though some may find his apocalyptic denouement hard to swallow. (Dustin Hoffman, Susan George.) Reviewed.

*TRAFFIC (Columbia-Warner)

The further adventures of Tati's M. Hulot, this time on his way to deliver a gadget-stuffed car to an auto show. Sporadically funny, but Hulot disappointingly takes a back seat, the other passengers are no match for him, and there's a lot of slack en route. (Jacques Tati, Maria Kimberley.) Reviewed.

**TWO LANE BLACKTOP (Rank)

... or Two Chassis in Search of an Engine. Director Monte Hellman charts the endless wanderings of a pair of hot-rodgers drag-racing across the U.S. Strong on small town atmospherics and American psychoses, but ultimately flawed by its over-knowing allegorising. (James Taylor, Dennis Wilson, Laurie Bird.) Reviewed.

**WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? (United Artists)

Lively Grand Guignol set in a meticulously realised 1930s America. Curtis Harrington borrows liberally from everyone but keeps the creepy atmosphere going and gets brilliantly detailed performances, notably from a completely revitalised Debbie Reynolds. (Shelley Winters, Micheál MacLiammoir.) Reviewed.

**WHERE'S POPPA? (United Artists)

Brilliant black comedy about a young lawyer (George Segal) who wants a normal sex life (with the delectable Trish Van Devere) but is saddled with an outsize Jewish mother complex which means that if he even talks about sending his old lady (Ruth Gordon at her battiest) to an old people's home, he is practically castrated. (Ron Leibman, director; Carl Reiner.)

**WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY (Paramount)

Agreeable entertainment for children, scripted by Roald Dahl from one of his novels and, apart from a few rather sickly songs, remarkably faithful to it. There are some superb, edible sci-fi sets, and Gene Wilder is faultless as the cranky inventor of the Everlasting Gobstopper. (Jack Albertson, Peter Ostrum; director, Mel Stuart.)

*WR—MYSTERIES OF THE ORGANISM (Academy/Connoisseur)

Makavejev's extraordinary collage of sex and revolution, part based on, part applying the iconoclastic theories of Wilhelm Reich. By turns erotic and bitingly funny as it slaughters yesterday's sacred cows and sounds the alarms for tomorrow's brave new world. (Milena Dravic, Jagoda Kaloper.)

WUSA (Paramount)

Miscalculated attempt at incisive satire of America's right-wing backlash and media manipulation, tidily dividing its characters between the sensitive (Joanne Woodward at her most Methodist and Anthony Perkins at his most psychotic) and the survivors (Paul Newman and Laurence Harvey), and numbing the spectator with its own brand of overkill. (Director, Stuart Rosenberg.) Reviewed.



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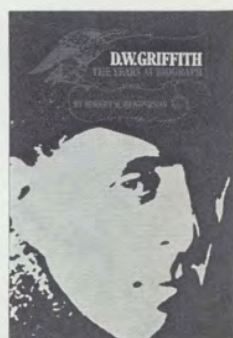
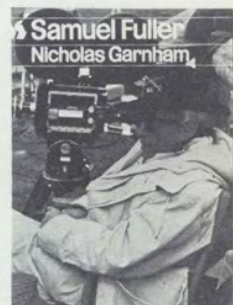
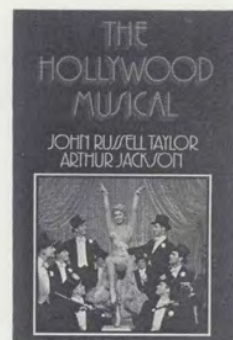
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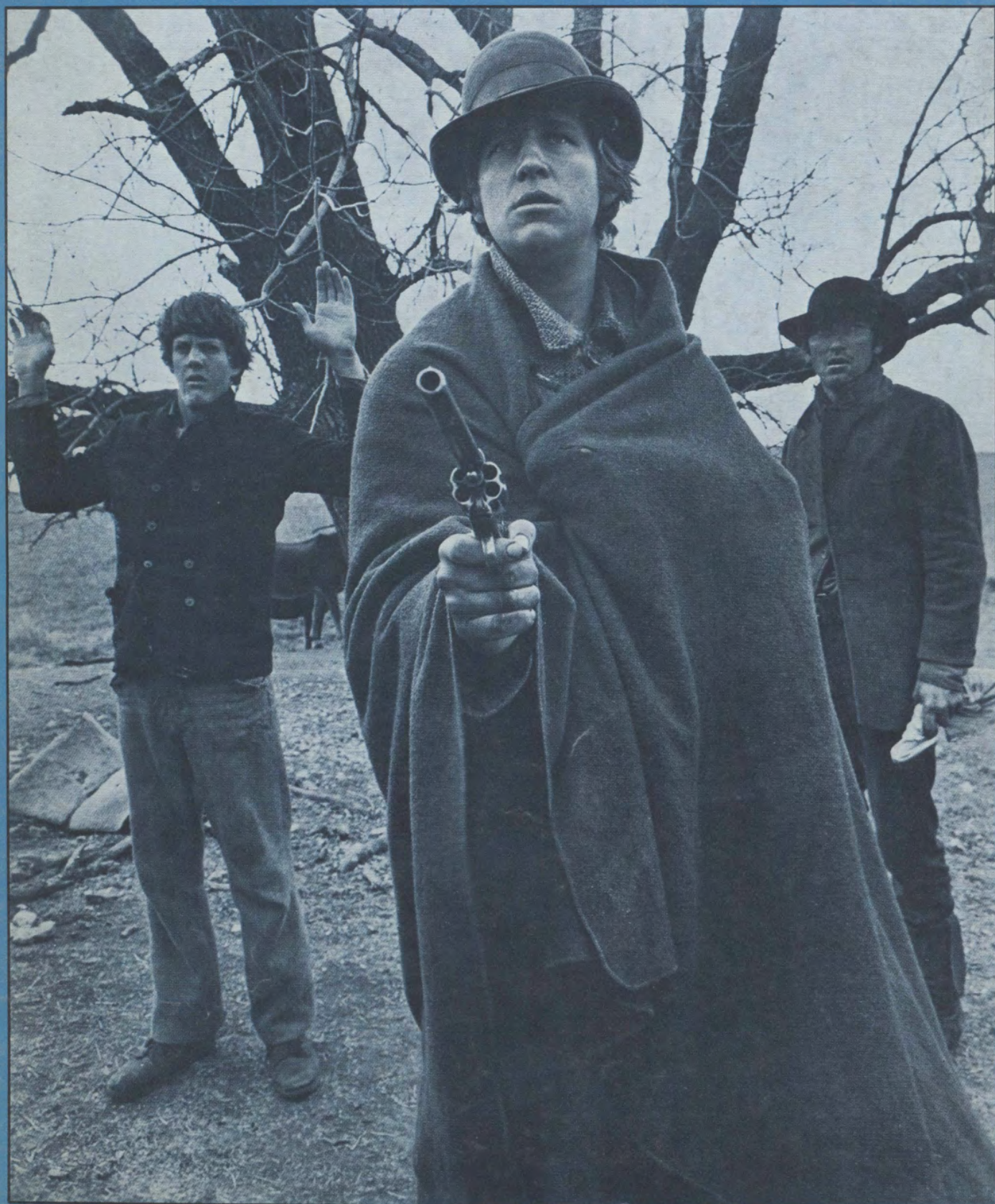
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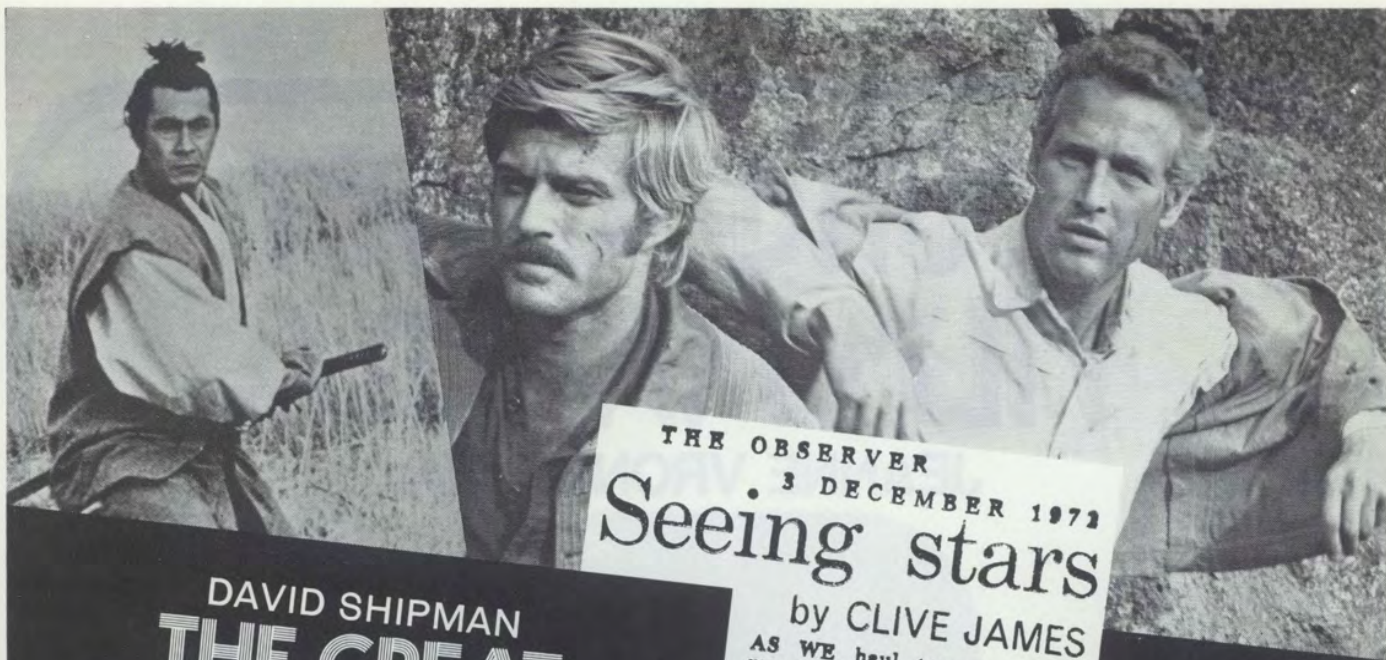
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by CLIVE JAMES

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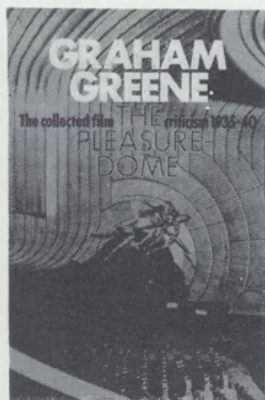
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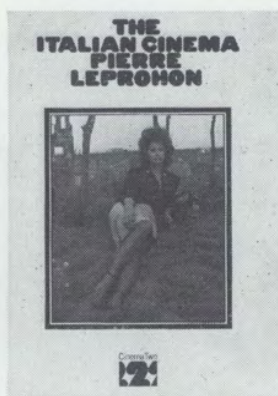
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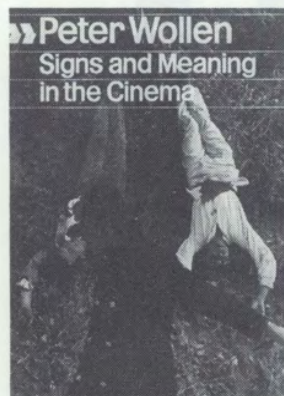
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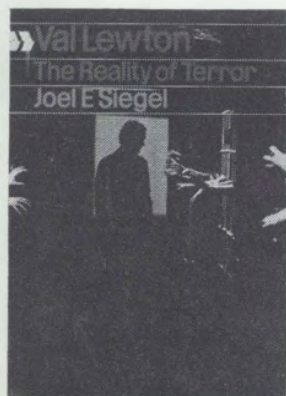
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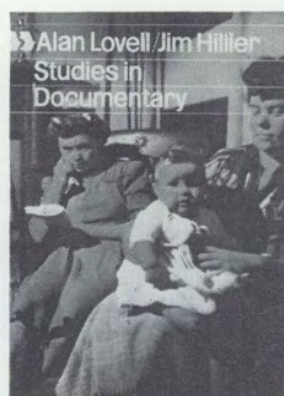
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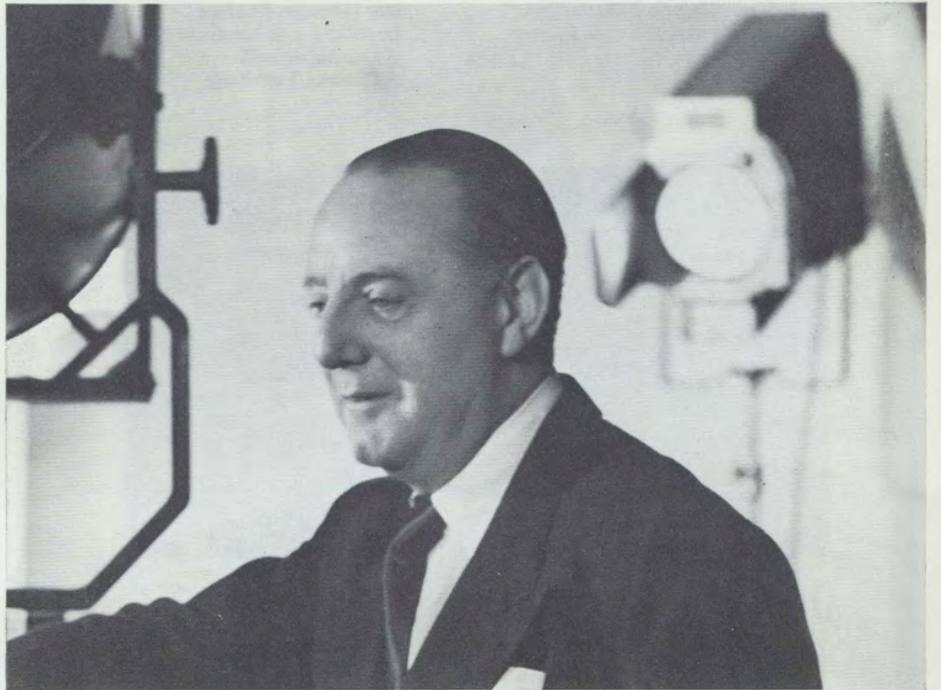
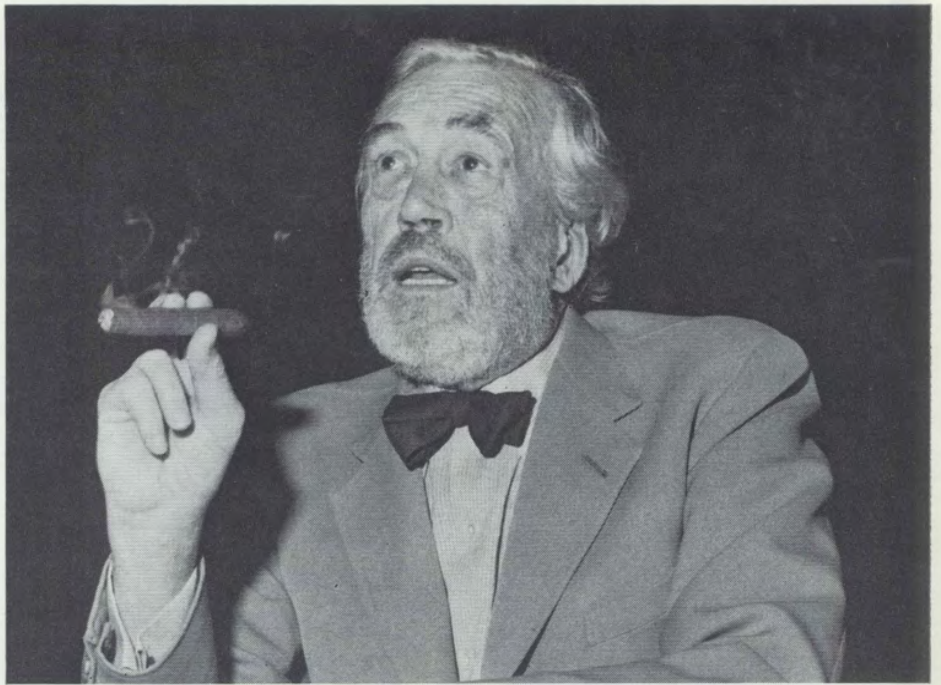
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Victor Saville (photograph by Anthony Buckley)

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SIGHT AND SOUND

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Interruption as Style



Buñuel's



Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie



Jonathan Rosenbaum

REPORTER: Who are your favourite characters in the movie?

BUNUEL: The cockroaches.

(from an interview in Newsweek)

'Once upon a time . . .' begins *Un Chien Andalou*, in mockery of a narrative form that it seeks to obliterate, and from this title onward, Buñuel's cinema largely comprises a search for an alternative form to contain his passions. After dispensing with plot entirely in *Un Chien Andalou*, *L'Age d'Or* and *Las Hurdes*, his first three films, and remaining inactive as a director for the next fifteen years (1932-47), Buñuel has been wrestling ever since with the problem of reconciling his surrealist and anarchistic reflexes to the logic of storylines. How does a sworn enemy of the bourgeoisie keep his identity while devoting himself to bourgeois forms in a bourgeois industry? Either by subverting these forms or by trying to adjust them to his own purposes; and much of the tension in Buñuel's work has come from the play between these two possibilities.

Buñuel can always tell a tale when he wants to, but the better part of his brilliance lies elsewhere. One never finds in his work that grace and economy of narration, that sheer pleasure in exposition, which informs the opening sequences of *Greed*, *La Règle du Jeu*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Rear Window*, *Sansho Dayu* and *Au Hasard, Bal-tazar*. On the contrary, Buñuel's usual impulse is to interrupt a narrative line whenever he can find an adequate excuse for doing so—a joke, ironic detail or startling juxtaposition that deflects the plot's energies in another direction. A typical 'Buñuel touch'—the 'Last Supper' pose assumed by the beggars in *Viridiana*—has only a parenthetical relation to the action, however significant it may be thematically. And lengthier intrusions, like the dream sequences in *Los Olvidados*, tend to detach themselves from their surroundings as independent interludes, anecdotes or parables. For the greater part of his career, Buñuel's genius has mainly expressed itself in marginal notations and insertions. To my knowledge, his only previous attempt at an open narrative structure since 1932 has been *La Voie Lactée*—a picaresque religious (and anti-religious) pageant, much indebted to Godard's *Weekend*, which came uncomfortably close to being all notations and no text, like a string of Sunday school jokes.

If *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie* registers as the funniest Buñuel film since *L'Age d'Or*, probably the most relaxed and controlled film he has ever made, and arguably the first contemporary, global masterpiece to have come from France in the Seventies, this is chiefly because he has arrived at a form that covers his full range, permits him to say anything—a form that literally and figuratively lets him get away with murder. One cannot exactly call his new work a bolt from the blue. But its remarkable achievement is to weld together an assortment of his favourite themes, images and parlour tricks into a discourse that is essentially new. Luring us into the deceptive charms of narrative as well as those of his characters, he undermines the stability of both attractions by turning interruption into the basis of his art, keeping us aloft on the sheer exuberance of his amusement.

Seven years ago, Noël Burch observed that in *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*, Buñuel had at last discovered Form—a taste and talent for plastic composition and a 'musical' sense of the durations of shots

and the 'articulations between sequences'; more generally, 'a rigorous compartmentalisation of the sequences, each of which follows its own carefully worked out, autonomous curve.'* *Belle de Jour* reconfirmed this discovery, but *Le Charme Discret* announces still another step forward: at the age of 72, Buñuel has finally achieved Style.

Six friends—three men and three women—want to have a meal together, but something keeps going wrong. Four of them arrive at the Sénéchal's country house for dinner, and are told by Mme. Sénéchal that they've come a day early; repairing to a local restaurant, they discover that the manager has just died, his corpse laid out in an adjoining room—how can they eat *there*?—so they plan a future lunch date. But each successive engagement is torpedoed: either M. and Mme. Sénéchal (Jean-Pierre Cassel and Stéphane Audran) are too busy making love to greet their guests, or the cavalry suddenly shows up at dinnertime between manoeuvres, or the police raid the premises and arrest everyone. Don Raphael Acosta (Fernando Rey), Ambassador of Miranda—a mythical, campy South American republic resembling several countries, particularly Spain—arranges a secret rendezvous in his flat with Mme. Thévenot (Delphine Seyrig), but M. Thévenot (Paul Frankeur) turns up at an inopportune moment. The three ladies—Mmes. Sénéchal and Thévenot and the latter's younger sister, Florence (Bulle Ogier)—meet for tea, and the waiter regrettably announces that the kitchen is out of tea, coffee, alcohol and everything else they try to order. Still other attempted get-togethers and disasters turn out to be dreams, or dreams of dreams. At one dinner party, the guests find themselves sitting on a stage before a restive audience, prompted with lines; another ends with Don Raphael, after a political quarrel, shooting his host; still another concludes with an unidentified group of men breaking in and machine-gunning the lot of them.

At three separate points in the film, including the final sequence, we see all six characters walking wordlessly down a road, somewhere between an unstated starting place and an equally mysterious destination—an image suggesting the continuation both of their class and of the picaresque narrative tradition that propels them forward. Yet if the previous paragraph reads

Buñuel on set. With Bulle Ogier, Delphine Seyrig and Fernando Rey

*'Two Cinemas,' *Moviegoer* No. 3, Summer, 1966.

like a plot summary, it is deceptive. The nature and extent of Buñuel's interruptions guarantee the virtual absence of continuous plot. But we remain transfixed as though we were watching one: the sustained charm and glamour of the six characters fool us, much as they fool themselves. Their myths, behaviour and appearance—a seductive, illusory surface—carry us (and them) through the film with a sense of unbroken continuity and logic, a consistency that the rest of the universe and nature itself seem to rail against helplessly. Despite every attempt at annihilation, the myths of the bourgeoisie and of conventional narrative survive and prevail, a certainty that Buñuel reconciles himself to by regarding it as the funniest thing in the world.

Interruptions, of course, are a central fact about modern life; as I write this in a friend's apartment, the phone has been ringing about once every two paragraphs. Using this sort of comic annoyance as a structural tool, Buñuel can shoot as many arrows as he wants into our complacencies about narrative, the characters' complacencies about themselves. He exercises this principle of disruption in a multitude of ways, in matters large and small: in the opening scene at the Sénéchals' house, Florence's dopey, indifferent, comic-strip face drifts irrelevantly into the foreground of a shot while other characters chatter about something else behind her, and similar displacements of emphasis abound everywhere.

Take the last attempted dinner. It begins with a red herring which leads us to suspect

poisoning ('I prepared the soup with herbs from the garden'); the conversation is broken off for a cruel exchange with the maid about her age and broken engagement; and while M. Sénéchal demonstrates the correct method of carving lamb, Florence stubbornly insists on pursuing her deadpan astrological profile of Don Raphael. After the gang breaks in to shoot them all, our sense of their total demise—a Godardian image of overlapping corpses—is interrupted when we realise that Don Raphael has hidden under the dinner table, and is reaching for a piece of lamb. Still crouching under the table, he bites savagely into the meat—a comic-terrifying reminder of the dream in *Los Olvidados*—and is finished off by a final blast of gunfire. Lest we suppose that this is the last possible interruption, we next see Don Raphael waking up from his nightmare. He gets out of bed, goes into the kitchen, and opens the refrigerator to take out a plate of lamb.

Every dream and interpolated story in the film carries some threat, knowledge or certainty of death—the central fact that all six characters ignore, and their charm and elegance seek to camouflage. Ghosts of murder victims and other phantoms of guilt parade through these inserted tales, but the discreet style of the bourgeoisie, boxing them in dreams and dinner anecdotes, holds them forever in check. To some extent, Buñuel shares this discretion in his failure to allude to his native Spain even once in the dialogue, although the pomp and brutality of the Franco regime are frequently evoked.

(The recurrent gag of a siren, jet plane or another disturbance covering up a political declaration—a device familiar from Godard's *Made in USA*—acknowledges this sort of suppression.) But the secret of Buñuel's achieved style is balance, and for that he must lean more on irony—an expedient tactic of the bourgeoisie—than on the aggressions of the rebel classes; when he sought imbalance in *L'Age d'Or*, the revolutionary forces had the upper edge. An essential part of his method is to pitch the dialogue and acting somewhere between naturalism and parody, so that no gag is merely a gag, and each commonplace line or gesture becomes a potential gag. Absurdity and elegance, charm and hypocrisy become indistinguishably fused.

Another form of resolution is hinted at in the treatment of a secondary character, Monsignor Dufour (Julien Bertheau), a bishop who is hired by the Sénéchals as a gardener ('You've heard of worker-priests? There are worker-bishops too!'), and figures as clergy-in-residence at many of the abortive dinner parties. Late in the film, he is brought to the bed of an impoverished dying man—a gardener himself—by an old woman who asserts that she's hated Jesus Christ since she was a little girl, and promises to tell him why when she returns from delivering carrots. Dufour then proceeds to attend to the dying gardener, who confesses to having poisoned the bishop's wealthy parents when Dufour was a child. Dufour kindly and dutifully gives him absolution, then lifts up a nearby rifle and shoots the man through the skull.

'Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie'



Thus Buñuel appears to arrive at the conclusion that Catholicism, far from being the natural opponent of Surrealism, is the ultimate expression of it; and it seems strangely appropriate that after this scene both the bishop and the old woman with her promised explanation are abruptly dropped from the film, as though they've suddenly cancelled each other out.

Writing in 1962, Andrew Sarris remarked that Buñuel's 'camera has always viewed his characters from a middle distance, too close for cosmic groupings and too far away for self-identification.' The singular achievement of Buñuel's crystallised style is to allow both these viewpoints to function—to let us keep our distance from the characters while repeatedly recognising our own behaviour in them. Cryptic throwaway lines, illogically repeated motifs and displacements in space and time give the film some of the abstractness of *Marienbad*, yet the richness of concretely observed social behaviour is often comparable to that in *La Règle du Jeu*. A similar mixture was potentially at work in *The Exterminating Angel*—the obvious companion-film to *Le Charme Discret*, with its guests unable to leave a room after finishing dinner. But despite a brilliant script, the uneven execution left too much of the conception unrealised.

Undoubtedly a great deal of credit for the dialogue of *Le Charme Discret* should go to Jean-Claude Carrière, who has worked on the scripts of all Buñuel's French films since *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: the precise banality of the small talk has a withering accuracy. Even more impressive is the way that Buñuel and Carrière have managed to weave in enough contemporary phenomena to make the film as up-to-date—and as surrealistic, in its crazy-quilt juxtapositions—as the latest global newspaper. Vietnam, Mao, Women's Lib, various forms of political corruption and international drug trafficking are all touched upon in witty and apt allusions. Fernando Rey unloading smuggled heroin from his diplomatic pouch is a hip reference to *The French Connection*, and much of the rest of the film works as a parody of icons and stances in modern cinema.

Florence's neuroticism—as evidenced by her loathing of cellos and her 'Euclid complex'—lampoons Ogier's role in *L'Amour Fou*; Audran's stiff elegance and country house harks back to *La Femme Infidèle*; while Seyrig's frozen, irrelevant smiles on every occasion are a comic variation of her ambiguous *Marienbad* expressions. And as I've already suggested, Godard has become a crucial reference-point in late Buñuel—not only in the parodies and allusions, but also in the use of an open form to accommodate these and other intrusions, the tendency to keep shifting the centre of attention.

A few years ago, Godard remarked of *Belle de Jour* that Buñuel seemed to be playing the cinema the way Bach played the organ. The happy news of *Le Charme Discret* is that while most of the serious French cinema at present—Godard included—seems to be hard at work performing painful duties, the Old Master is still playing—effortlessly, freely, without fluffing a note.

LF LONDON FESTIVAL 1972



'Solaris': Nathalie Bondarchuk

It hasn't on the whole been a good year for the cinema, so thank God for the old atheist. Buñuel's *Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie*, arriving like some eleventh hour miracle, was one of the highlights of the 1972 London Festival. Tarkovsky's *Andrei Roublev* would have been another, but a different kind of fate robbed us of this obviously blighted film, and the chance to compare it with his mind-bending *Solaris*. Otherwise, in a disappointing year this was a disappointing festival, though as SIGHT AND SOUND went to press during the festival's last week there was at least the promise of several unknown quantities. What follows is a small selection from over fifty features (at the last count) screened at the festival. Other films (*Company Limited*, Teshigahara's *Summer Soldiers*, *Red Psalm*, Oshima's *Dear Summer Sister*) have been reviewed from European festivals.

And what of the rest? This is not the place to debate the purpose of a film festival; but the sheer volume of films at the 1972 festival prompts a few questions. In the first place, if by general consensus 1972 was not a vintage year, it would seem to follow that a larger than ever selection must involve some scraping of the barrel. And though London (mercifully) avoids the jamboree atmosphere of some festivals, there is a sense in which a festival film is an event—and promoted as such. Perhaps it's a bad thing, but a festival film inevitably invites expectations. London is after all heralded as the festival of festivals, the pick of the year's best. As it turned out, 1972 was a year in which too many expectations were dashed within half an hour's screen time.

The expansion of the festival in recent years (twice as many films in 1972 as there were four years ago) has brought many advantages, not least the opportunity to include more independent cinema and films from countries which four years ago

scarcely had a cinema at all. But all the advantages, as Christopher Mason's film graphically demonstrated, are not necessarily beneficial. A few years ago it was a safe bet that you would either love or hate what London offered; in 1972 it was more a case of you pays your money and you takes your choice—and pot luck it was. One might justify the choice of the not very startling *Traces*, for instance, on the grounds that it marks the beginnings of an independent cinema in Morocco, which might otherwise have missed the recognition it may deserve. But six new features from Japan seemed two films too many.

If there is a conclusion to be drawn from London 1972, it may not be very encouraging. The 1971 festival prompted a speculation that the cinema seemed to be at a crossroads, healthily striking out in new directions. In 1972, and it's been an impression of the year as well as of this festival, some of these roads have looked more like cul-de-sacs.

Andrei Tarkovsky/*Solaris*

Although the idea of a planet that adjusts itself to suit its human explorers is not unusual in science fiction (Bradbury made an early excursion with his short story *Here There Be Tygers*), the world of *Solaris* has a unique potency. It is the creation of Stanislaw Lem, a Polish writer almost unknown in the West despite his allegiances to Asimov, Van Vogt, and other contributors to the magazine *Astounding* in the 1950s. While the film of *Solaris* (written in 1961) seems unlikely to transform Lem overnight into another Clarke or Burgess, whose writings are in every sense more accessible, it should at least confirm to a wider public the harsh brilliance of his vision, in which surrealism and cybernetics orbit each other like twin moons.

To separate Lem from Tarkovsky in discussing the latter's film of *Solaris* is too elaborate an exercise for a short review, but a necessary comment must be that Tarkovsky has declined nearly all invitations to special effects and emphasises instead the novel's domestic, personal aspects. Where 2001 could be accused of omitting human interest in favour of spectacular gadgetry, *Solaris* is almost the exact reverse. The film is constructed around the private life of Kelvin, an astronaut psychologist sent to investigate strange happenings on the space-station circling *Solaris*, a mystery planet with a viscous, flowing surface, and an atmosphere of livid, unsettling colours.

Kelvin's country home, shared with his father, provides the unexpected Dovzhenko-style opening and even more startling close to the film, and there are several references back to this environment (becoming significantly more glacial) in which he is also glimpsed as a child. Tarkovsky ventures, in fact, upon the territory which Lem signposted but left unexplored, with the result that the astronaut's gloomily detached outlook and the effect upon him of the *Solaris* phenomena become clearer, more intelligible, and more emotionally charged. Most importantly, where Lem ended in characteristic Quixotic ambivalence between hope and failure, with a 'faith that the time

of cruel miracles was not past,' Tarkovsky demonstrates with something of a conjuror's flourish that the miraculous is actively in evidence.

The *Solaris* miracle is a process whereby the planet fathoms fears and memories buried in the minds of its observers, and externalises these into living reconstructions, either several metres high on its own surface, or life-size within the space-station. Confrontation with the apparently genuine skeleton from one's own closet is understandably disturbing, and Kelvin arrives on his investigation to find that one member of the three-man crew has committed suicide and the others are grappling distractedly with their tangible hallucinations. It takes only one night's sleep for Kelvin's own worst recollections to take on flesh and blood. His beautiful wife, Hari, who on Earth had killed herself when he abandoned her, reappears in his cabin all the more beautiful for having been compiled from his anguished mental picture of her lost perfections. He knows she's a fake, but any effort to dispose of the creature results only in fresh suffering for them both.

In the tradition of Poe, *Solaris* concerns itself more with the traumatic discomfiture of unexpected resurrection than with the long-term consequences; and indeed this proves to be Tarkovsky's point. The seething planet, turbulent metaphor as much for an imperfect deity as for the psychoanalyst's couch, provides what the men come to recognise as a mirror of themselves, reflecting with inescapable clarity the faults which caused the errors now incarnate before them. Kelvin's relationship with his wife is duplicated in his uneasy tolerance of the new Hari, who like the real wife is finally driven to suicide. 'Lately we weren't getting on too well,' he says weakly. And the reasons, the *only* reasons Tarkovsky has shown us, stem from Kelvin's upbringing—from the conflicting personalities of his parents, the bitter snowscapes of his childhood. Driven to recall the elusive affection of his mother, Kelvin at last realises why his marriage never had a chance, and the omniscient planet is then standing by to take him to the next stage of his self-analysis

by placing him at the feet of a surrogate father.

If mankind could only understand itself better, it would have an illustrious future—the genesis of the Starchild is subtly repeated in *Solaris* to the accompaniment of passages from Bach, allusions to Faust and Luther, and the occasional pause for impressive if familiarly Sovexport rhetoric ('Man strives for a goal he fears and does not need . . . what Man needs is Man'). But where alien intervention was impersonal in 2001, Tarkovsky's film notably breaks new ground in exploring the pathos of an alien struggle to conform to the ways of men. Whether tearing her bloody way through steel doors, recovering damply from death by liquid oxygen, or tremulously experimenting with the hazards of sleep, Hari (Nathalie Bondarchuk) is the most seductively tragic other-worlder the cinema has yet shown us. And as a whole *Solaris* is the nearest the cinema has come to capturing the complexities of modern science fiction, with its intermingling of time and memory, acute uneasiness, and emphasis on elegance and style. The immaculately photographed space-station, jumbled with baroque incongruities reminiscent of Tarkovsky's battle landscapes in *Ivan's Childhood*, is a superbly designed labyrinth of inarticulate panic, a memorable symbol of the disordered human mind.

PHILIP STRICK

Henry Jaglom/*A Safe Place*

A little girl gazes entranced from her window as a magician makes a silver ball float through the air; a young woman looks back from the same window in an attempt to recapture the magic of her memory. Existing simultaneously in a world where time is suspended and events occur at will in past or present, dream or reality, these two images are the anchor-pieces of *A Safe Place*. Twin poles of nostalgia, objective and subjective, they irradiate the film with a sense of loss that is echoed, soothingly and hypnotically, by the stream of old songs ('I'm Old Fashioned', 'Give Me Something to Remember You By', 'Someone to Watch Over Me') which accompany Susan, self-styled Noah (Tuesday Weld), as she tries desperately to launch her ark of childhood on a sea of reassurance that there is safety in memories and regrets.

'Tomorrow is where the past is,' she retorts when the young man who loves her asks why she is always thinking of the past, never of tomorrow; and she retreats timidly, persistently, from current entanglements, hoping that her magician, conjured from memory, will be able to restore the ecstasy of the moment when once, as a very small child, she flew like the silver ball to the top of a pear-tree. Delicately orchestrating Susan's dilemma in terms of both image and movement, Henry Jaglom employs stasis to characterise Fred (Philip Proctor), the prosaic young man who sits at her feet, holding her earthbound with his doggily uncomprehending devotion; a ceaselessly circling camera for Mitch (Jack Nicholson), the lover who sweeps casually in from the past to cut the ties which bind her to Fred and then disappears, leaving

'A Safe Place': Tuesday Weld, Orson Welles





'Adult Fun': Peter Marinker

her free but helplessly adrift; and for the Magician (Orson Welles) who teasingly holds out the sign she is waiting for, the rainbow which will herald her safe return from the deluge of living, a mysteriously hovering presence which is neither reality nor fantasy, neither movement nor immobility.

Yet *A Safe Place* is not merely a Freudian whimsy about a fixated girl appealing to the security of a father-figure from her childhood. Cut into and completing its rondo on the theme of nostalgia are two contrasting episodes. First, the monologue by the tearfully suicidal girl (Gwen Welles) who explains how she was terrified of being beaten up by drunks in the Bowery until she found herself among them in the street; though still aware that she may be attacked, she is no longer afraid because she no longer feels isolated. Second, the bizarre *angst* revealed by a young man who was worried because his pet cat might fall ill; now it has indeed fallen ill, and he is worried because he is worried that it may die.

What Jaglom is after is that elusive sense of reconciliation where happiness and unhappiness are held in precarious balance, but which is invariably lost because human beings cannot resist the temptation either to anticipate or recapitulate. Living in the present, Mitch's answer is to destroy the past (he 'murders' his ex-loves) and let the future take care of itself; while Fred's is to take care of the future by letting the past destroy itself (dwelling on painful memories, he says, makes one bad company). But for Susan, whose tomorrow is in the past, that reconciliation can only be achieved by annihilating time—by annihilating, in other words, the emotions of anticipation or recapitulation which threaten it. Here Jaglom rejoins the Godard of *Une Femme est une Femme*, and there is no better apology for *A Safe Place* than Godard's commentary on that film: 'If you see a bouquet of flowers on a table, does it mean something? It doesn't prove anything about anything. I simply hoped that the

film would give pleasure. I meant it to be contradictory, juxtaposing things which didn't necessarily go together, a film which was gay and sad at the same time.'

Most of the time, with Tuesday Weld capping her sweater-orgy from *Lord Love a Duck* with a spiralling fantasy about the sexual properties of telephone numbers, and Orson Welles solemnly trying to prove that he is a real magician in a succession of fruitless attempts to make something—anything—disappear, *A Safe Place* is delightfully, eccentrically funny. Most of the time, too, it is sad and yearning, weighed down by the fears which are steadily driving the heroine to suicide in her inability to cope with life. Yet there is no contradiction in the contradiction, for in this mysterious haven, this safe place where past, present and future have no meaning any more, happiness and unhappiness become one. 'Can you tell me a story?' asks Susan at the beginning of her odyssey. 'Last night, in my sleep,' begins the Magician, 'I dreamed that I was sleeping, and dreaming in that sleep that I had awakened, I fell asleep . . .'

TOM MILNE

Wim Wenders/*The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*

Since the hero of Wim Wenders' film seems to exhibit all the textbook symptoms of alienation—lack of response to people matched by an exaggerated response to his mechanical or inanimate surroundings—critics have rushed self-reassuringly to Camus' *L'Etranger* for comparison. In fact, *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty* begins, if anything, where Camus' novel leaves off. Joseph Bloch is not alone in his sickness, a moody and aloof anti-hero, but simply a more conspicuous victim—more self-aware and less busily hypocritical than his fellows—of the atrophying responses of the society he lives in. His name, Bloch, suggests a deadened sensibility, his profession, a goalkeeper, one man's isolation in a field of

frenetic activity. And the hero's one gesture towards proving that he is alive and present, by murdering a girl, fails because the society around him is too myopic to recognise him as the killer.

The story's tensions, and its humour, derive from our knowledge that although Bloch is self-evidently near the end of his tether, he will never actually have the comfort of reaching it. Wenders' frontier village, a marvellously Kafkaesque creation, is in a state of total stasis. The border itself is closed, and communication has broken down not only between people and people (an old schoolmaster complains that the new generation of schoolchildren is totally inarticulate; a missing child, first described as 'crippled', is later announced to be 'dumb'), but between people and their surroundings (the local policeman walks with exaggerated caution in case he treads insensibly on a hedgehog). Meanwhile, objects pile up uselessly in the streets (a heap of rotting melons on the pavement) or accumulate in the houses. The proprietress of the Border Inn, whose share of the universal ennui is indicated punningly in her name Hertha Gabler, waits perpetually for a delivery of new furniture.

Curiously, though, the film's sense of impasse is never oppressive. Bloch's emotional detachment is for him a form of invulnerability. The only time in the film that he demonstrates emotion is on the football field—waving an angry fist at the referee's refusal to disallow the penalty goal—and in a sense what the film sets out to do is to show the negative side of an obsession. We do not see much of Bloch's enthusiasm for his game, but we do see his indifference to everything else. And the reason the film's steadiness of mood is exhilarating rather than deadening is that it is the steadiness of a virtuoso tightrope walk between despair and a saving nihilistic humour.

The film's style conveys exactly this feeling of strained stillness, embodied in Wenders' static shots and clean framing, in the banal phrase-book dialogue (written by Peter Handke, on whose first novel the film was based) and in the emphasis on the

'*The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*': Kai Fischer, Arthur Brauss



menace of objects (close-ups of the wheeling discs in a juke-box, the amplified sounds of cutlery, or beer pouring into a glass). From the opening sequence indeed, which shows us Bloch's failure to save a penalty kick and his sullen departure from the match, the emotional temperature inexorably drops. A succession of short scenes—Bloch looking for an evening paper, Bloch going to the cinema—appear and quickly die (by constant fadeouts), while the central scene of the girl's murder is staged with a totally disarming casualness. Bloch strangles her during some idle love play, the screen fades, Bloch wakes from a short sleep to tidy up and clear his incriminating fingerprints, and then quietly walks out.

We almost need to be reminded—as we are intermittently by the dirge-like brass chords which punctuate the film's early sequences—that Bloch's story is a kind of tragedy, his Hamlet-like irresolution linked to the goalkeeper's destructive hesitancy before his opponent's ability to bluff and double-bluff, just as his mounting sense of personal insignificance is embodied in a last-scene comment that the goalkeeper is the one player on the field whom *nobody* watches. The film duly ends with a total paralysis of movement. Walking out of the village, Bloch attempts to make a call to town, but discovers the public telephone has been vandalised; a bus pulls up at the roadside, but he declines to board it. Last of all, the film returns to the football ground, where Bloch, now a spectator and not a player, explains to a bemused member of the crowd the full tragic implications of the goalkeeper's role.

NIGEL ANDREWS

James Scott/Adult Fun

With his excellent film about Richard Hamilton, James Scott helped to reanimate the languid form of the 'art documentary'. What his camera explored was not so much the polished surface of the painter's works as the fragments—of imagery, information and experience—that had combined to provoke their final form. The newspaper headlines, film clips and neon signs which assailed the eye were matched by a disconnected but coherent commentary from Hamilton himself, so that the film emerged less as a standard monument to the created work than as a lively demonstration of the creative process: a journey through the artist's mind, anchored to the now immutable reality of his finished canvases and silk-screens; a description of the process whereby the arbitrary is made absolute.

For his first feature, *Adult Fun*, Scott employs a similarly fragmented technique. The film's surface is a mixture of semi-documentary observation, *ciné-vérité* interviews, improvised and scripted dialogue scenes, and at least one brief 'fantasy' insert; while on the soundtrack, spoken exchanges are tugged from naturalism to formal thriller by the sudden intrusions of Simon Standage's highly charged score and linked by the hero's voice-over commentary—a stream of self-consciousness compounded of such diverse sources as Sartre, Céline and the *Evening Standard*. Unlike the Hamilton film, however, *Adult Fun* is itself the canvas it seeks to illuminate. Its metaphysical specu-



'Minamata': the shareholders' meeting

lations, moored to no convincingly sustained reality, ultimately founder in a sea of contradictions and imprecision.

Which is by no means to suggest that the film is lacking in plot. A moderately unsuccessful stockbroker, bored with his middle-class wife and—with his introspective doubts and furtive consummations—increasingly boring to his liberated girl friend, Chris Thompson (Peter Marinker) dreams of affirming his identity through some act of violent revolt. ('I should like something new to happen... I think of the Middle East... even the war.') He establishes contact with a firm of 'contract cleaners' and, furnished with a gun and £300, prepares to spy on the secret dealings of a crooked industrialist who conveniently takes him on as his PR man. Mistaking the private detective sent to spy on him by his meddling mother-in-law for an underworld rival, Chris brutally murders him; and himself meets a sudden death while being tortured in St. John's Wood by the industrialist's incompetent thugs.

Unfortunately, the patent absurdities of the plot do little to substantiate Chris' musings about the more general absurdity of the human condition. Scott, who also wrote the screenplay, seems uncertain whether to opt for social satire, social realism or metaphysical speculation. He surrounds his hero with a gallery of caricatures (camp detective, middle-class in-laws, stiff-lipped boss, and a gangster who looks like something from the chorus line of *Guys and Dolls*), yet allows them to depart from type whenever this serves to advance the plot or to enforce one of his several themes. On an unlikely family outing to Ramsgate, the father-in-law reminisces about Chamberlain and World War II, not from behind the potted palms of some refined hotel but from inside a chrome-and-plastic ice-cream parlour. His genteel wife suddenly produces a dubious past in provincial rep which enables her to precipitate the private detective (another fallen star) into the plot.

Yet the film's rather heavy-handed satire on the intricacies and implications of the British class system is balanced by moments of astute observation. The coffee bar where

Chris holds a fidgety meeting with his girl friend (Deborah Norton), the room in which he hides out from the law, the Ramsgate ice-cream parlour, the detective's Piccadilly office—all of these have an imposing reality which the characters inhabiting them seem generally to lack. Thematically this supports the hero's remark (from Sartre's *Nausea*) that 'objects ought to be useful, but they touch me; it's unbearable.' But unlike Sartre, Scott fails to sustain a universe in which objects are consistently more 'touching' than people. Chris' downtrodden wife Mary (Judy Libert) springs sympathetically to life and his defence when the police invade their home; the prostitute with whose monologue the film ends has a poignant and indisputable authenticity.

The character who fails totally to touch us is Chris himself. One of his many introspective statements ('I can only retrieve scraps of images, but I am unclear whether they are real or imaginary') possibly holds the key to the film Scott thought he was making, but it might equally provide the epitaph for the film he has in fact made. Chris remains as distanced from us as the people he meets, hurts or destroys are from him. Verbally, he may suggest to us the crisis through which he is passing. But the acts of violence—given or received, real or imaginary—to which this leads him lack the authority of one of Richard Hamilton's collages, or of the *Evening Standard* headlines (about Sewell or Martha Docherty) with which he punctuates his thoughts.

JAN DAWSON

Noriaki Tsuchimoto/Minamata

Pollution, once varieties of rodeo and revolution have been exhausted, seems likely to be the commercial cinema's next big subject. So far, it's been a theme largely confined to horror movies (civilisation threatened by plant mutations and the like) and television doomsday serials. Meanwhile, and before pollution becomes a saleable proposition in radical chic cinema, a few documentary

film-makers have been concerned to record a few unadulterated facts. *Minamata* is one such document, evidence assembled by Noriaki Tsuchimoto during 1971, when this particular manifestation of industrial pollution, Minamata disease, briefly made international headlines. *Minamata* is a horror film, but its facts are more disturbing than any horror fiction.

It's difficult to comment on *Minamata* without falling back on a set of worthy liberal clichés. The few hundred people who saw it during the London Festival don't want to know that I was as moved and shocked by it as they were. Nevertheless, it seems worth recording, both as a film in its own right and because as yet there are no plans for wider distribution. So this is by way of an appeal for the film. Sympathetic distributors discouraged by the prospect of a didactic tract or a simplistic propaganda exercise need not be. The film is neither of these; nor is it a mere recitation of the facts of Minamata poisoning, though its emphasis throughout is factual.

What has become known as Minamata disease is mercury poisoning, caused by the assimilation of inorganic mercury compounds discharged into the sea as industrial waste. The disease was detected long before scientists had heard of Minamata, but is so called because in this fishing community on the Japanese island of Kyushu its incidence was concentrated and devastating. The source of the disease is an aceto-aldehyde plant which in the early 1950s began using inorganic mercury compounds to increase production. Result: uncontrolled waste discharge, poisoned fish, and for the people who eat them a strange disease which intoxicates the nervous system and is characterised by ataxia, which can mean anything from slurred speech to complete loss of bodily control and a slow and agonising death.

Noriaki Tsuchimoto and his team have documented the progress of this obscenity from its first appearance in 1953, through an unsuccessful attempt by the local fishermen to break into the plant and stop production (the unions, not surprisingly, thwarted this direct action), to government recognition of the disease fifteen years after the first death, and from this the development of organised dissent, culminating in a direct confrontation between the chemical company and the surviving victims of the disease. A good deal of the film is taken up with interviews with Minamata patients and relatives of the dead, but the emphasis is not, as it might have been, on the physical degradations (there are only a few, mercifully brief seconds of the effects of a scientist's experiments with mercury poisoning in cats). The film's method, and its powerful effect, is a gradual and progressively disturbing accumulation of the facts of this pollution as it has affected the people of Minamata.

What these people have to say is often harrowing. There is the woman who watched her husband shouting in pain through the night and felt she had to apologise to the neighbours for the disturbance; there is the boy whose lively eyes and disconcertingly loaded replies to the interviewer's questions belie his slurred speech, until he cries halt to the interview, his very private strength momentarily exhausted; there are the children in hospital, hopeless cases except to the doctor who with infinite patience is

teaching them to count. Amazingly, what emerges from this view of shattered lives is nothing like despair; indeed there are moments when the catalogue of distress is leavened by humour (albeit black), like a wily old fisherman's demonstration of how he catches octopus, by biting them between the eyes. The film's slow, deliberate construction of detail movingly records a community coming to terms with disaster. In their own words, these 'country bumpkins from Minamata', as they call themselves when they tour cities to raise funds for their campaign, reveal their progression from desperation ('I used to wonder how the political system worked,' bemoans a woman silenced by a Ministry official) through anger (let one of the chemical company's executives drink some mercury-poisoned water) to a determination to claim their right to more than a letter of apology and a miserable reparation from the company.

Private incapacity is gradually transformed into public political action; and eventually the political and economic motives which first introduced mercury poisoning to this fishing community are challenged on their home ground, at the company shareholders' meeting when the Minamata patients' committee, now shareholders themselves and symbolically dressed in funeral white, disrupt the company's attempt at public apology. There's a moment's sympathy for the embattled company president as he tries to speak across the din of protest. But what can he possibly have to say?

The film ends with the fishing boats of Minamata putting to sea; pollution has ended some lives, but it hasn't killed the community. Mercury poisoning or no, there will still be those who like the victim in the film can't resist the taste of red mullet. The implication is that the Minamata pollution should never have happened; the certainty is that it or something like it will happen again (page one headline in this morning's newspaper: 'Thalidomide: £5m offer angers critics'). But at least in Minamata, and against all the odds, a few small victories have been won; and through *Minamata* a few more people will be aware of it.

DAVID WILSON

Marco Bellocchio/ In the Name of the Father

Bellocchio's heroes are animated by a mysterious electric spark which threatens to explode in spontaneous combustion. One need only think of Sandro in *I Pugni in Tasca*, battering his body against immovable objects, or Camillo feverishly distorting his own mirror-image in *La Cina è Vicina*. And like Frankenstein's monster, frustrated in their aspiration to common dignity, they are haplessly impelled towards destruction. The interesting thing about the protagonist of *Nel Nome del Padre*—unmistakably labelling him as no hero at all—is that these manifestations of frustration have been transferred to everyone else, leaving him to march erect and unimpeded through the film, and leaving the audience to wonder whether he is oppressor or oppressed.

The setting is a school run by Catholic fathers, a sort of approved institution for the sons of rich bourgeois rejected as hopeless by other establishments. No prizes for guessing,

with the priests muddling through a ritual of authority at the head of the hierarchy and illiterate peasants serving as kitchen slaves at the bottom, that this is designed as an image of Italy. The allegory, however, is lifted into something much more concrete by the atmosphere of total manic depression. In class, a teacher stares impassively at his pupils, who stare blankly back. One boy, followed by another, secretly bends to tie his shoelace. Behind his desk-lid the teacher rolls a pair of dice. All the boys now seem bent double. And Bellocchio compounds the sense of dislocation, held in uneasy equilibrium by those twin stares, with an image of one boy defying anatomy to sleep with his head inside his desk.

The disorientation starts almost from the beginning, with the school suggesting alternatively a prison (with its galleries, guards and locked doors, the dormitory block might be lifted direct from *The Criminal*), or an asylum in which everyone is secretly gratifying his fruitless fantasies. A priest meditates under the lid of a coffin-like chest; an assistant prowls by night, spreading aimlessly blasphemous graffiti on the walls; a pupil masturbates dreamily through a lecture on the terrible wages of sin. And in this madhouse of inertia the only moment of common purpose comes when everyone crowds round to gape into the mouth of a missionary whose tongue has been mutilated by Chinese communists and who looms into the camera, as demonically compelling as Rasputin, to lisp the unfathomable word of God.

Literally beaten into this slough of despond by a father demanding respect but receiving a fist in the face (a galvanically funny opening scene), comes Angelo Transeunti (Yves Beneyton). Cool and inflexible, he remains withdrawn from the frenzy about him, obsessed within by his belief in the power of power and by the need to create freedom, order and purpose. But his revolt against the system, escalating wildly in scope and ambition, is simply absorbed, leaving no change. Hence the snarling anger of the film, which chronicles a lost opportunity: for the time is 1958-59, a moment following the death of Pope Pius XII when it seemed that the old era had finally ended for Italy and that a new age might begin. Hence, too, its image, which would otherwise be pure fantasy, of a clergy hovering uncertainly between old and new, smiling at blasphemies and wondering if this might be the new dogma.

Transeunti (and by implication his revolt) is neatly characterised in an early sequence where he casually takes up a boy's idle boast that for ten thousand lire he would hang for an hour from the rings in the gym. Later, when the sweating, pain-wracked boy re-emerges, impelled to confess that he fell off four minutes before time, Transeunti simply snaps his wallet shut. He is, in other words, an idealist cushioned by wealth and privilege into inhumanity, a budding Mussolini by any other name; and his total disregard for the human element—whether pulling his schoolfellows in his wake like so many sheep, or irritably urging a fellow-conspirator to shoot his manically possessive mother—is the key to both his rebellion and its failure.

An Interview
with
Raoul Walsh
by
James Childs

CAN YOU RIDE THE HORSE?

Walsh on location



In 1972 Raoul Walsh reached his eighty-fifth birthday. Physically speaking, he isn't the same Raoul Walsh who directed Gloria Swanson, Ida Lupino, Victor McLaglen, Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks, Humphrey Bogart, Theda Bara, James Cagney and so many others between 1912-1963; nor is he the same man who acted in films until he lost an eye in a car accident in 1928. But Raoul Walsh is still a very vigorous man, and one of the few still alive whose life reaches back so profoundly into the beginnings of American film history. A great storyteller on film, Walsh is also a fine raconteur in person.

In William Bayer's interesting *Breaking Through, Selling Out, Dropping Dead*, he spends a number of pages on the difference between a 'heavy' and a 'junior'. By any definition of those terms, Walsh is a 'heavy', an apparently no-nonsense film-maker who got his job done and done well, and when it was done it was appreciated by audiences everywhere.

There's not much biographical information on you in English. What I have is that you were born in New York City on March 11, 1892 . . .

WALSH: '87.

You were educated at Seton Hall University . . .

No. I didn't have that much education. My family moved to Texas [around Del Rio, near the Texas-Mexican border] soon after I was born. Was brought up down there, went to several schools, and lasted a couple of weeks in each. Then my family finally sent me up to that Jesuit school at Seton Hall. Incidentally, that's where I met Jack and Lionel Barrymore. When the three of us got together, we were out in a week . . . I was soon back in Texas. Postgraduate course. So I never graduated from college. Christ! I never even graduated from grammar school. I stayed on the family ranch, grew up on the ranch. Worked part of the time in Montana, then I went back to Texas and got a job with the government breaking horses: 'topping' horses. The government was out buying horses for the cavalry and the ranchers were supposed to run in horses that were broken. Every now and then they'd send in a bronc to sell. When the colonel overseeing the operation saw a horse that looked a little like an outlaw, we'd top it. I got twenty-five cents for topping a horse.

How long would that take you?

Until I was thrown off. Some of them were pretty wild, pretty wicked. Finally I busted my leg, but they patched me up and sent me to San Antonio for more medical treatment. While I was waiting around San Antonio, I was sitting one day on the porch of a cheap hotel where I was living when a fellow walked by—a city fellow, a dude. He said, 'You want a job, cowboy?' Then he told me to come to the local theatre at seven o'clock. So I hobbled down there, still wearing bandages on my legs. He noticed them: 'Hell, you've got to ride a horse. How can you ride a horse with that leg?' I said, 'Where is he?' I rode him and the guy hired me for thirty dollars a week. I had been making thirty dollars at the ranch, so I didn't get any raise. I hung around for an hour or so. After a bit they dressed me up in a white outfit, with a Ku Klux Klan hood, and I got on a horse. The horse was on a treadmill. I heard the fiddlers and those sons of bitches on the drums and the buglers blowing. Then they handed me a fiery cross. There I was with a bum leg and they pulled me and the horse across and the curtain came down. Afterwards I asked where the feller was who usually rode the horse. They said he was in the hospital . . . he landed in the orchestra pit.

Anyway, I worked with that show all the way to St. Louis, playing one-nighters here and there. The leading man, a fellow named Franklin Richey, said, 'How'd you like to be an actor?' I said I'd try anything once. He then got the assistant stage manager to give me the parts of several of the actors. Frank said I might have an opportunity to act whenever other actors got sick and couldn't go on. 'Just stand in the wings,' he said, 'and watch what they do. Sometimes they get drunk and can't go on. You'll get a chance before we're through.' Never got a bloody chance, though, all the way to St. Louis. Stood in the wings watching those

bums reciting, got on a horse and did my bit, and that was it. Then one of the character actors persuaded me to go to New York.

What year would this be?

About 1909, I guess. In New York I signed up with several agencies. I got a job with a stock company in Hoboken for one week. I had three lines—missed them twice. Anyway, the gist of all this is that the woman at one agency, noticing that I was from Texas, asked if I could ride a horse. I said yes, and she asked very apologetically if I'd consider going into motion pictures. I said, 'Not at all. Where are these pictures being made?' 'Over in Union Hill, New Jersey,' she says. In those days, you see, none of the Broadway actors had anything to do with pictures. They wouldn't go in them because the picture played in nickelodeons and honky-tonks, and they didn't want to lower themselves. She gave me a card to see the Pathé brothers, who were just starting then. Met the two brothers: I didn't understand any French and they didn't understand much English, but they had an interpreter. 'Can you ride the horse?' they asked. 'Yes, I can ride the horse.'

They took me to a livery stable and brought some nags out. I saddled one of the horses that looked pretty good and rode down to the brothers who were sitting on a porch. I got off. They said, 'All right.' Then I made a flying mount. Nobody back there knew what a flying mount was: that's when you leap into the saddle without touching the stirrups. So I dug my heels into the horse and took off. On the way back one of the brothers met me with a piece of paper and told me to sign it. 'You're an actor for Pathé Brothers.' I was a lousy actor, but I could sit on a horse.

Was there for about a month, I guess. We'd all go out into the New Jersey hills. I don't know how much riding I did. One day we took a helluva long trip to this large estate, with this blonde dame—I was playing the lead—and we got ready to play the scene. Then there was a big uproar because the cameraman forgot to bring the film. A whole day spent just riding up and back for nothing. Anyway, D. W. Griffith saw one of these 'masterpieces', asked me to see him, and when we met asked if I'd like to go to California. I made a deal with them and he took me to California in 1910.

Weren't you in some Biograph films in New York?

Yes, I played in some of them, with Mary Pickford. Mary, of course, later separated from Biograph before the time we all went to California . . . Funny coincidence. Griffith's biggest and best picture was *Birth of a Nation*, which was based on the old show I had been in called *The Clansman*, the play the feller hired me in to ride across the stage. I brought that up to Mr. Griffith. 'You know, I was once in the stage version of this down in Texas.' 'Remarkable coincidence,' he said. 'I'm thinking of having you play John Wilkes Booth.' When he made it I did play Booth. I was a lousy actor, you know. Instead of Griffith shooting Lincoln, he should have shot me!

In the assassination scene you catch your spur on the flag, which is what apparently happened to Booth. How many times was that scene shot?

Did it once and it near broke my leg. It was sore for a long time. In those days an

actor had to do the stunt himself.

Which was your first picture for Griffith? Do you recall?

No . . . bunch of one-reelers. He'd give us a sheet of paper and tell us to get in the car with the boy and girl [hero and heroine] and the cameraman and see what we could get.

When did you first assist Griffith?

When we first went to California, about 1910 or 1911. I'm a bit hazy on the dates. If I was making one or two-reelers, then someone else would be the assistant. But if I was at liberty, then I'd help. Usually if he had any horse action, then I was the assistant. 'Mr. Walsh, would you kindly get



Raoul Walsh in the 1920s

those horsemen up here,' or 'Get that Indian off that horse.' I might say, 'He's all right. He can ride. He's just drunk. They're all drunk.' It was my job to round up the cowboys, who didn't have telephones. Griffith would say, 'Mr. Walsh, I need fifteen cowboys tomorrow morning at Newhall,' which is a good twenty-five miles from downtown Los Angeles. I'd have to go down to where the cowboys were sleeping and in saloons and such at two or three in the morning, and get them on their horses. We'd be up there in the morning when the old man got there.

Did you assist him on *Birth of a Nation*?

Yes, off and on. The battle scenes and different things.

Then you left to direct your first picture away from Griffith?

I left Griffith while he was in Chicago having trouble with the Negroes about *Birth of a Nation*. While he was there the Fox Company contacted me and made a pretty good offer. I went to Mr. [Frank] Woods, who was the studio manager, and told him about this. Woods said, 'Mr. Griffith told me to hold on to you, Wally Reid and Henry Walthall. But you'll make more money with Fox on that one picture than you'll make in a year here. But you go. The company will fold in a year.' 'Because of my picture?' I asked. 'No, but you know these fly-by-night companies . . .' But the picture clicked that I made for them. That was a picture called *Regeneration*, a gangster film with a fellow called Rockcliff Fellows and Anna Q. Nilsson. Fox used to own the

Academy of Music where pictures used to run only three days. This one ran for three weeks. After *Regeneration* Fox made me another lucrative offer and I stayed. I was with them I don't know how many years.

Could I backtrack for a moment to *Life of Villa* [1912]? You wrote the script for this, and you worked with Christy Cabanne on it and played Villa. Did you meet Villa himself?

Oh, sure. I was sent down there to Mexico to meet him and pay him off so we could make the picture. We photographed him and some battles and stuff. Funny thing, nobody can find a print of that film anywhere.

During those early years, did you consider yourself an actor first and a director second, or vice versa?

You did both, you know. If Griffith was making something and he wanted me or Gene Pallette or any of those fellows, he'd normally ask us to work with him. But as an actor I was a real ham, not any good. I didn't want any part of it, really; I wanted to get into directing.

Do you think you learned much from Griffith?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

In your pictures one notices extreme long shots that are reminiscent of similar shots in *Birth of a Nation* . . . Even in your *Objective Burma* there's an extreme long shot of Flynn and company signalling with a mirror that might remind one of Griffith.

He liked to establish the locale and let the audience digest where the hell it was at, and then gradually he'd creep up on those thespians. Of course the bastards are standing there with their tongues out waiting for a close-up.

What did you think of Griffith personally?

I liked him. He was a very fine man, a very silent man, a sad man, a dreamer. For years and years he'd refer to me as 'Mr. Walsh': 'Mr. Walsh . . . Mr. Walsh. Mr. Crisp . . . Mr. Crisp.' He never called anyone by their first name, and you never called him anything except 'Mr. Griffith'. Every once in a while we'd relax and call him 'Chief', but never to his face.

What did you think of Billy Bitzer?

He was a great cameraman and a student. He was always . . . I can remember Billy in the early days, after a storm for instance, with his camera out photographing fogs. Or he would motor down to Santa Monica, when he wasn't on a picture, to try to get a sunset or something. He was always fooling around with things, putting gauzes on the camera to soften the focus.

How did you actually get the opportunity to direct? You were an assistant to Griffith, but did he just tell you to get behind a camera and start shooting?

Well, the studio manager, Mr. Woods . . . he kind of liked me because I was there early in the morning and I would stay till late at night, and was always around with Griffith. He called me and said they were going to give me a chance to direct. So and so of a picture, a nice, tight, little story. So he gave me a job. They were then making a five-reeler—I think it was an Ibsen play—and the director was on it for about a week. It was one of the first five-reelers Biograph ever made, but the director, poor devil, had hit the laughing water and he was thrown

out. Griffith asked me to take over directing Henry Walthall and the others. He had me come in to see him with the actors. I had rehearsed them, and he said, 'Very good,' or 'Change this a little,' or 'Do this here.' He was a great man.

Looking over your films of the 1930s, I noticed that you liked to work with Victor McLaglen. Was he a personal friend?

I gave him his big start, you know, in *What Price Glory*, and we became close friends after that. He had a naturalness that I liked. The actors we used for their faces and physiques in the early days were much better in pictures than actors who came from Broadway and gave you an overblown, stagey performance, yelling their lungs out because they were still talking to the gallery. In the days of the silents you could hear those bastards a mile away. 'OUT OF MY HOUSE!' one might say. I'd then say, 'Turn it down, we've neighbours asleep here . . .' [Pause, and Walsh laughs to himself]. One of them would ask, 'What is the procedure now, Mr. Walsh?' 'You come in, kick him in the ass, and then go out,' I'd answer. 'He doesn't believe in rehearsing, this man,' they'd say. 'He rushes you in and rushes you out.'

Which actors did you most enjoy working with?

Cagney, Bogart, Flynn, Cooper, Gable; the old ones such as Wally Beery and George Raft. Got along well with all of them. They were co-operative actors because we were on a tight schedule, maybe twenty-two days. The producers thought it was big-hearted to raise it to thirty-two. It wasn't easy to make a five-reeler in twenty-two days. Now they take twenty-two months, and they're all too expensive.

What about *Thief of Bagdad*? Wasn't that expensive for its time?

No, that wasn't. I don't think it reached a million. There was nothing over a million in the old days: two hundred thousand, five hundred thousand, never higher. Fairbanks had a good organisation. Two of his brothers ran it and they were a bit on the thrifty side. Good traders. Someone gave the impression that *Thief of Bagdad* cost two million, but it didn't.

What kind of storyline did you have for *Thief of Bagdad*?

Doug was a pretty good writer himself, you know. We would have meetings and he had a very valuable woman there, a Mrs. Woods, a former schoolteacher. We'd meet before we started the picture. Doug would say, 'Well, Irish, what do you think? Should I do it this way?' I'd get some wild idea and Doug would say, 'Jesus! That's good. Keep thinking, keep thinking.' Then Mrs. Woods would work on it and Doug and I would go and exercise or he'd start rehearsing the stunts he had to do. We used to run around a track, too. We were always exercising. And we got along well, Doug and I. It was a great departure for me, away from the rough stuff I'd been doing to this dreamy kind of epic.

In *What Price Glory* you introduce Dolores Del Rio with a shot of her behind. Eileen Bowser has said, 'This hind shot is



Top: Pauline Starke (right) in 'Lost and Found on a South Sea Island' (1923). Centre: McLaglen, Edmund Lowe and Phyllis Haver in 'What Price Glory' (1926). Right: George Walsh (the director's brother) in 'From Now On' (1920).



'The Big Trail' (1930)

almost a Raoul Walsh trademark.' Is that true?

That's probably true. I don't know. In those days we'd take five or six sexy shots knowing that four of them had to go.

Did you always edit your films?

Oh, yes, yes.

What about in the 1940s?

By then the producers had become powerful, but the way I shot a picture allowed them to cut it only one way. They couldn't fool around with it.

What was your most successful picture?

Grossing? I guess *What Price Glory*. It grossed \$170,000 in one week, at sixty cents top admission. The crowd was so big in New York that for a while Fox had it running twenty-four hours a day. The sequel, *Cock-Eyed World*, was a hit, but the third one was a dog. I told them they shouldn't go to bat three times with a thing called *Women of All Nations* [1931], but they knew it all, so I said, 'It's your money, boys; it isn't going to go.' Those two fellers [Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe] were such a drawing card after *What Price Glory*, but then the public got a bit tired of them. The producers should have given them a rest from that story. *Cock-Eyed*

World [1929] was the first film in which McLaglen talked. He had a very broad English accent . . . 'All right, blighties, get out of my way here.' I hired a couple of gorillas to go round and correct him: 'Sit between these two bums and talk like they do.' During the shooting he learned to talk with more of an American accent, but at night he'd visit with his English pals, then the next day come on the set with his accent and we'd have to change it all over again.

How did you get in the line about 'the lay of the land'?

In that scene I had McLaglen call to El Brendel, I think it was, who is walking with this good-looking chick, 'Hey, where are you going?' Brendel says, 'Captain, I'm bringing you the lay of the land.' Brendel then reaches into his pocket and takes out a map: 'Here's a map that will tell you where the enemy is sleeping.' The censor thought that was all right. When it opened and Brendel says, 'I'm bringing you the lay of the land,' the laughter damn near blew the roof off the theatre.

What kind of scripts did you prefer working on?

Outdoor stuff, adventure, things that would keep the picture moving. I didn't

like indoor films. I never did a picture with guys in tuxedos or evening clothes.

Did you write many of your scripts?

We'd add things to a script, take things out, tinker with them. The writers would fill up with laughing water and write: 'There's a cat that appears in a doorway, and it slowly walks across . . .' There's nobody who can take a scene with a cat. It's one animal you can't work with. One time somebody insisted that a cat appear in a picture I made. I told the lady who owned the cat to put it in a doorway and then make it move across a room. The lights went up on the shot and that cat took off and hasn't been found yet. We'd always change scenes like that and impossible shots that would take two hours to get with all the technical problems involved. Some of those writers would fill up on the laughing water and write half a page on a shot in Grand Central Station. Well, you couldn't go down to Grand Central Station and line up for just half a page. If you had four or five pages, that was all right. So we'd cut it out and play it in front of an outhouse somewhere . . . See, we had to work so damned fast. You'd be working on a picture in June and it had to be in a theatre in September. It was pre-sold, and you got money from the exhibitors for the production, so you felt you really had to bear down on it. In the early days, I'd finish something at two in the morning and start a new one at eight the same morning.

What do you think was your best script?

I don't know. I like the old *What Price Glory*. I like *Thief of Bagdad*; it was a change of pace. But with all the one and two-reelers, all the pictures I made—over two hundred, you know—it's pretty hard to go back over them. They all differ so, and the silent script was a lot different from the talkies script. When talkies first came in, they brought a lot of people from Broadway and long speeches were written that half of those bums couldn't remember. You'd have to keep cutting them. Of course, in the beginning there was no outdoor sound. Everything had to be indoors.

With whom did you have most freedom as a director during the sound period?

I never really had trouble with anybody, because most of the actors I handled were professionals. We got along very well. Once in a while there would be a little thing about deleting some word, some dialogue. That was all it amounted to. That's why I fought shy of women, because they're so goddam picayune about scenes and this and that. 'I don't feel comfortable in this . . .' After they read the goddamn thing and you get into a scene, they'll say 'This stinks!' I'd think, 'Why didn't it stink when you first read and accepted it?'

What actresses did you like to work with?

I made a picture with Marion Davies and Bing Crosby. She was a great girl, she was terrific. Jane Russell was good; Ida Lupino was good. Lupino got a seven year contract out of a picture I made. Was it *They Drive By Night*? She's in a courtroom scene and goes crazy or something. After Jack Warner saw it he signed her up for seven years. I worked with Dietrich on *Manpower*. She was good, a little methodical. She knew a hell of a lot about lighting. She'd say, 'Raoul, do you mind if I ask the cameraman to put a baby spot there?' I'd say, 'Go

'Top of the world, ma. . .' James Cagney in 'White Heat' (1949)





Pola Negri in 'East of Suez' (1925)

ahead, Marlene, you know more about it than he does.' She'd say, 'Well, thank you, Raoul.' Then we'd spray those spots all around her. I got along great with her. Other people had trouble, but I never did. In the old days Pola Negri was a wild Hungarian. Theda Bara, she was all right to get along with.

Did making films ever become not fun for you?

Only when we'd go out on location and the clouds would come up. We had no lights in the early days. Gradually we started to get some lights, though, Kleig lights. Lots of times the actors got what we called Kleig eyes. Pretty tough: their eyes would be badly burned and they had to put castor oil in them for two or three days before they could see again. A lot of times we'd use reflectors and forget the lights. The sun would hit the reflectors and shoot the sun in.

Did it perhaps become less fun when the producers came in?

Yes, it became a big problem then—a big problem. Directors lost a certain control, and there were lots of arguments about scenes.

Which of your more recent films was easiest for you to make?

The outdoor Western was pretty easy. After you had made so many of them, you knew every location and where to go and how to handle the thing. Also, the riders you could get stuff out of. Exterior pictures were always tough on women, because when the sun hit them they'd start blinking and stuff, and you had to build canopies over them. Then half the time a wind storm comes up, and the canopy would end up in Cincinnati.

Did you strive for realism in your films? In *White Heat*, for instance, before Mayo and Cochran kiss, they spit out their gum. Did you introduce a touch like that?

Sometimes you had time—the clouds would come up or something would have to be changed on the set—and you'd start thinking about little pieces of business for the actors. But otherwise you had to go so damn fast you didn't stop for a gum-chewing scene. That's the difference between a stage director and the motion picture director. The stage director has got a month in which he can put all that stuff in. But on a picture sometimes you have so much trouble getting a cast that you can't do much with the script before you start. Sometimes you never saw a bloody actor until he was down there on the set at eight o'clock in the morning.

***White Heat* is one of my favourites among your post-war films...**

That's a big hit all over. I just got back from Japan. I'd go to a restaurant and the waiter would say 'White Heat! White Heat!' It played well there all the time. The Japanese love everything that ends tragically: they remember that last scene with Cagney and think it's one of the greatest of scenes. I made another picture, *Colorado Territory*, in which Joel McCrea and Virginia Mayo were killed at the end. That's a terrific hit in Japan. They play that and *White Heat* all the time. Every Saturday night the damn things are playing.

Your heroes, especially in gangster films, always seem to die at the end. You once said that one reason you were happy to have Bogart in *High Sierra* was that you could kill him off, but you didn't feel you could kill off George Raft.

He turned it down, you know, Raft. Warner told me. Warner always referred to actors as 'those bums', and he said, 'Raoul, this bum turned the script down. Why don't you talk to him?' So I went to George's house and had lunch with him. We talked it over, but George was adamant. He said, 'No, I don't want to die in the end.' I said, 'Georgie, you'll have to, the censors will demand it.' He said, 'To hell with the censors, then.' So I went back to Warner and said, 'Jack, no going. Talked to him for two or three hours. He doesn't want any part of it.' Warner says, 'Well, who the hell are we gonna get? Goddamn it, we gotta get going!' He hated to hold anything up. I said, 'Well, you've got a fellow under contract—Humphrey Bogart.' Warner said, 'Do you want to take a chance with him?' I said, 'Of course I will.' 'All right, go and see the bum.' I went over to Bogart and he read the script and called me up about midnight: 'Christ! This is good. When do we start?' So that was that.

Who are some of your favourite directors?

I like old Henry King, and John Ford.

Do you think you and Ford share some affinity?

Probably. We're both of Irish descent.

He came into the business pretty early. I was the first one in. Another fellow named Allan Dwan was also a good director. I think Allan came in the year after I did. And Charlie Chaplin and I were great pals in the early days. I remember when Charlie worked for Sennett for five bucks a day.

Were there any foreign film-makers you especially liked?

I liked Lubitsch. He and I were pretty good pals. He once said, 'Raoul, I would like to make vat you make: is box office. You make vat I make, sometimes box office, sometimes no box office.' Fritz Murnau, he was a good one. You see, when Lubitsch and Murnau first came over, they got in touch with me, and I sort of steered them about the different approaches to things. Gave them a pretty good schooling in how to handle themselves. They appreciated that, and we became good friends. Mike Curtiz and I knocked around in the same studio. Mike was a nice old guy.

One critic, Andrew Sarris, has said, 'The Walshian hero is less interested in the why or the how than in the what. He is always plunging into the unknown, and he is never too sure what he will find there.' Do you feel that's too precious a criticism, or that it's on the nail?

I guess it's so. Everyone has his own impression of things. Maybe the guy was drunk.

What do you see in your films that makes them Walshian?

Maybe the continuous action. That's probably it. You see, sometimes the stories are so trite, and you can't let the audience get ahead of you. 'Jeez, he's going to get shot.' So you carry them along to get them away from that thought.

Was there a single most satisfying moment in your career?

Having been in the business so damn long, that's hard to answer. My greatest disappointment was censorship, which until recently was very strict. I could remake some of the pictures I made way back: it would be great. All the stuff that was cut out.

'A Distant Trumpet'. Released in 1964, this was Raoul Walsh's last film



James Paul Gay

WHAT DO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO EXIST IN THE WORLD DO? THEY DIE



Give a class of young children some 8 mm. cameras, turn them loose and let them make movies. The Swedish Board of Education, which adopted this programme, was so proud of its idea that it commissioned a special 25-minute colour film called *School Photography* to publicise it. This is what it shows:

All the children attend a large meeting at which various proposals are brought up and discussed. A committee begins working on the script and jobs are assigned: cameraman, actors, technicians. After further discussion, the script is approved and shooting begins. Close-up: broken glass on teacher's desk. Medium shot: teacher perplexed, leaves the room to fetch the headmaster. Inserts: children looking worried. Title: 'Who Did It?' Full shot: headmaster stalks in, thunder written on his brow. More reaction shots: the tension builds. Moving shot: trail of broken glass leading to a closed cupboard which the headmaster opens. Close-up: headmaster breaking into a broad grin. Medium shot: a cat sitting amid broken glass in the cupboard. Full shot: everyone laughing. Title: 'The End'.

One can see why a board of education would be so delighted with this film. The preparation was careful and extensive: every child was told what to do, nothing was left to chance. The result of this audacious (and expensive) experiment need not be laboured: another variation on 'Run, Dick, run. See the ball.'—at 16 frames per second. Of course, this isn't really a film by children. It's a film showing what adults expect children to make. Since no alternatives are presented, it's not surprising that the children fulfil those expectations. That is precisely what makes such a film so interesting: in scope, form, content and technique it represents a perfect example, not of a child's film, but of the vast majority of films for children being made today.

It is by now universally accepted that the mass media, especially television, have become the major educative source for young children. In Sweden, a child's access to the mass media is determined as follows:

FILM: Most children see films at weekend matinées. A few feature films for children are produced in Sweden, and some, such as the *Pippi Longstocking* series, are tremendous money-makers. Most of the product is still imported, however, and Disney retains the lion's share. The cinémathèque in Stockholm shows an excellent selection of international films on Saturday afternoons, but these programmes rarely reach more than 150 children per week.

MAGAZINES: This is the area of least state control among the mass media in Sweden. The field is dominated by a few large publishing houses such as Bonniers and Wennerbergs. Pulp novels, comic books, love stories and super-agents abound.

RADIO: Sweden has three radio stations, all run by the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation (Sveriges Radio). These broadcast entertainment and news, as well as special school programmes prepared by the educational division of S.R. Sixty per cent of the shares of Sveriges Radio are owned by various popular movements and trade unions, 20 per cent by the press, and 20 per cent by other private business interests. The State has no direct financial stake in the Corporation, but it does appoint the Director General and 10 of the 20 board members. Aside from the three radio stations, S.R. runs two TV channels, an educational division (School-TV), a news bureau and a foreign service. There is no commercial advertising on either television or radio.

TELEVISION: Children's programmes on television come from the following sources: (1) The children's division of TV-1. (2) The children's division of TV-2. (3) The School-TV division, which operates independently of both channels and is financed from the budget of the Board of Education. (4) A separate government-funded educational facility, the Committee for Educational Television and Radio (TRU). This organisation produces its programmes independently at its own studios.

Resources

The four sources listed above account for virtually all structural information that reaches the child outside of the libraries and schools. Some of it, such as the programmes produced by School-TV, is designed specifically for use in the school as well. Of these four sources, by far the largest share, both in money allocated and time with the child, goes to television.

Other sources of media production for children are negligible. In 1971, the Swedish Film Institute co-produced a children's film called *Niklas and the Character*, but this was not part of any established production schedule. A state-appointed committee has been studying possible areas of new activity for the Film Institute, and some form of subsidy for children's film production is being considered. The problem is a difficult one, because the resources of the Film Institute are very limited, and there are many areas which need attention. The commercial film companies produce a few

entertainment films, usually based on books by well-known children's authors such as Astrid Lindgren, but very few educational films. Nearly all the short films available from the A-V Centres of the school system, for example, were either originally produced for television or else imported from foreign companies (Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc., the National Film Board of Canada) and dubbed into Swedish versions. Occasionally, a film intended primarily for an adult audience will also be deemed suitable for children: *The Apple War*, a very clever and highly successful comedy about the environment, is an example. But with very few exceptions, feature films in Sweden are forbidden to children under 15 (or, for certain films, 11), and the production of short films of any type, and especially those of interest to children, diminishes year by year.

When discussing available resources, therefore, one can safely limit oneself nearly exclusively to television production. Television in Sweden is financed by a licence fee paid quarterly by all viewers. At the moment, this amounts to \$43 annually (plus \$19.50 extra for colour). The annual resources allocated by television to educational programming can be broken down as follows:

1. TV-1: \$772,000 (1971)
2. TV-2: \$1,295,000 (1971)
3. SCHOOL-TV: \$3,947,000 (1970)
4. TRU: \$3,028,000 (1971).

The actual allocation for children's programming varies for each of the four production centres: TV-1 and TV-2 use nearly all of this money for varied programmes aimed at a range of children from pre-schoolers to teenagers; School-TV concentrates most of its production on the 12-15 year-old group. TRU works a great deal with adult education and at this point spends only \$80,000 of its budget on programmes for children (pre-schoolers), but this proportion is going to be sharply increased.

Adding these together, one arrives at a total budget of \$9,042,000 per year. This money is earmarked specifically for educational films and television shows, and it should be emphasised that all of it comes either from TV licences or tax monies, and is thus completely free of the commercial obligations that ordinary film production entails. Not a single programme produced with this money is expected to earn a profit, not a single programme is subject to the pressures of commercial sponsorship, and the degree of autonomy enjoyed by each of these divisions is exceptionally high by any international standard and something of which the Swedes are justly proud. Over \$9 million in annual public sponsorship for educational programmes in a country with a total population of only 8 million is extraordinarily high, and one waits expectantly for a spate of imaginative programmes that will flow from these abundant resources.

One waits in vain. The results of all this money and all this planning are with very few exceptions bitterly disappointing—text-book examples of how things went wrong.

The indifferent quality of most children's programmes is attested to by the fact that nearly all of them are broadcast just once or twice and then filed away in the vaults. The

goal of producing films for an international audience, which has characterised the Swedish cinema since the days of Sjöström and Stiller, does not extend to television, especially children's TV. While indifferent feature films tend to vary widely from country to country, bad children's programming has a certain sameness to it all over the world. The clichés are international, and certain recognisable patterns consistently recur:

1. The funny-little-man-who-tells-stories-to-children syndrome. Perhaps the best known programme of this type is the American *Captain Kangaroo*; in Sweden, he has been transformed into kindly old Mr. Barbalanda. No doubt viewers in other countries will recognise their own equivalents. The ingredients never vary: a young actor made up as an old man (it wouldn't do to have children see what a real old person, with wrinkles and a faltering gait, looks like), an idyllic country house far removed from any recognisable social environment (even a rural one), bright sunshine every day of the week, and a host of characters—preferably puppets, animals and paintings—that talk to the child and instruct him while everybody has fun together. The Swedish version has introduced one improvement: Barbalanda speaks with a Finnish accent. Finns are the largest group of foreign workers in Sweden, and the producers wanted to include a device which would lessen the isolation in which Finnish children in Sweden often live. It is a commendable innovation, but the basic premises are not changed.

2. The day-in-the-life syndrome. A child accompanies one of his parents to work, or goes out with an adult friend and learns a little of what people do when they've grown up and left school. There have been many marvellous programmes based on this theme, but unfortunately many more poor ones. One programme I saw was about a little girl who followed her mother into the city one day. The mother worked as a secretary, and spent over two hours a day commuting to and from her job: walking to a bus stop, taking a bus to the station, a train to the city, a subway to another bus stop, and finally another bus to her office. At work, one saw the little girl playing with her mother's typewriter, the co-workers and bosses playing with the little girl, a coffee break, a lunch break, and mother and daughter waving goodbye to everyone at the end of the day. The programme ends with them waving goodbye to the camera.

At no point is there any attempt to show what the mother really *does*, or what kind of work the men for whom the mother types letters and brews coffee are engaged in. Nor does anyone question why all the executives are men and all the secretaries women. The most basic issues pertaining to any kind of work—is it necessary, is it useful, could it be made more enjoyable—are never brought up. The child is never allowed to ask why it takes so long to get to work and why her mother has to use four separate means of transport (plus walking) ten times a week. A similar programme showed a little girl going with her father to his job. He is a carpenter on a building site, but neither the child nor the audience ever gets to see how he works, what his tools are, what other kinds of jobs exist at building sites, or anything else related to the real world.

Instead, the girl is given a ride on a freight elevator, and then packed off into a corner with some toys and a puzzle for the rest of the day.

3. The learning-isn't-really-so-painful syndrome. This type of programme begins from the premise that children possess only the most limited of intellects, and that if one absolutely must pollute their childhood with information, the least one can do is see that the process is sugar-coated. The rewards of learning are not knowledge and understanding, but rather the fun one can have with associated games. It is not difficult to see why this syndrome is so widespread: because of the way education is organised, learning and pain are synonymous to most people. Well-known actors or clowns are commonly used; they often work as a pair so that they can reassure each other at frequent intervals of how much fun they're having. The psychology behind these programmes can be illustrated as follows: I was watching a programme on the nature of light together with the show's producer. The programme was a paradigm of syndrome 3, and in addition it contained a number of factual inaccuracies (the sun was likened to a giant piece of burning coal; a laser was introduced as a 'strong light'). When I pointed these out, the reply was: 'I'm not expected to know these things. I'm a TV producer, not a scientist.'

4. The let's-create-a-world-of-our-own syndrome. In many ways this is the most interesting syndrome of all, because it can be seen in so many varieties, and because it produces both extremes of children's programmes—the best and the worst. The characters are as classic as in a Western: the sensitive, lonely child; the symbol of authority (usually a parent or teacher), who is often too self-absorbed to relate to the child; the hero's peers who exclude him (or her) from their group; and finally the person with whom the hero makes contact. Sometimes this is an adult (himself often an outsider in society); usually it is another child. The process by which the hero is excluded from his group can range from mild sarcasm or indifference to outright mobbing. One can see why this genre has attracted so many children all over the world, and why so many of the most talented children's authors have used it. These stories are often autobiographical, which explains part of their great charm.

The parallel with the Western can be drawn further: because the form is so tightly defined, and because it has such universal appeal, it has become open ground for both mediocrities and geniuses. At their best, the films and books of this genre transcend the boundaries of children's literature, uniting the world of child and adult. At their most common, both here and abroad, they simply wash over the screen in a flood of banality and bathos. At their worst, they can be transformed into pure exploitation: witness any of the Shirley Temple movies from the 1930s.

Outside of these syndromes, there are certain areas in which children's TV in Sweden excels. News programmes and documentaries from the regular programming schedule are often remade into children's programmes. Thus a child at last

has the opportunity to learn about subjects that are still too often taboo: life in an underdeveloped country, the war in Indochina, the secession of Bangladesh, environmental problems, etc. Every few months, some political or social group will become enraged by what it feels is the indoctrination of children, and there will be a great deal of publicity and debate in the press, but the threat to Sveriges Radio's autonomy is never serious. It is true that some of these programmes are of questionable objectivity, but since such incidents are considered inevitable, and since the alternative—censorship—is a much greater evil, the broadcasting council almost invariably dismisses the charges brought against them. This is not to say that the threat of censorship has been completely neutralised (the 'free theatre' groups who do political plays sometimes run into difficulties), but in general freedom of expression is reasonably well preserved.

Obviously, as in all industrialised nation-states, freedom of the press does not mean equal access to the means of information by all members of society any more than social welfare means equal access to the means of production. But it does mean that at least the traditional civil liberties are upheld. There have been no scandals here to compare with the American N.E.T.'s refusal to screen a documentary on I.F. Stone, or the French O.R.T.F.'s refusal to screen Marcel Ophüls' *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*.

Another area in which Sweden has been a clear leader is in making programmes of sexual instruction for children. Many programmes of varying types have been produced, and most of them are good: clear, straightforward, warm and frank. One rather charming film, called *Only A Cat*, shows the full life-cycle of a female cat. One sees not only how she conceives and gives birth to her litter, but also how she suckles them, feeds them, teaches them and plays with them. The film is intended for pre-schoolers. Sex education is one of the few areas in which Sweden considers her programmes good enough to export.

There have been a few instances of excellent programmes which superficially belong to one of the syndromes quoted above, but which manage to avoid the pitfalls. Sadly, they are rather isolated examples. One such programme is called *How One Builds A House*, and it is a gem of simplicity and cleverness. The producer (who was also his own cameraman, something very rare in Swedish television) went out to a building site where one of Stockholm's innumerable pre-fabricated apartment houses was being erected. He showed all the techniques that go into making such a building: assembly-line placement of components; pre-measured (and cardboard-thin) wall sections being fitted in less than a minute; whole walls, complete with windows, being lifted into place. The film ends with the building all finished, ready for occupancy—while a few yards away, a steam shovel is preparing the foundations for the next set of blocks. After the film was put into a rough cut, it was shown to a group of children the same age as its intended audience. They were encouraged to ask questions while the film was being run, and their questions, along with the answers given, were recorded. That's the

complete soundtrack. The film is bright, fast and honest. Total cost: \$400.

A completely different kind of programme is called *Night Creatures*. It is about the Spanish painter Joan Miró, and is a beautiful collage of sharply contrasting images: patterns of mosaic tiles, a city at night seen from the air, isolated parts of the human figure. These images are interspersed with shots of Miró's paintings, showing very clearly how extraordinarily life-like his 'abstract' paintings are. As befits a programme for children, many scenes were shot in a famous and still used playground in Barcelona where Miró grew up. The playground was designed by Antoni Gaudí i Cornet, and it is filled with fantasmical designs of mosaic and plaster. The beauty of Miró's paintings is not so very different from what one sees in this joyful playground.

A third programme, also in a class of its own, is called *Lotta and Per* and is about a brother and sister who do not get along with each other. The mother is a distant, nagging figure; the father is not seen. The programme uses animated figures over still photographs. The photos are made with a distorted perspective, expressing the frustration of both children in poignant visual relief.

It should be noted that of these three programmes, only *Lotta and Per*, by Birgitta Ohman, was made by a producer from the children's division. *How One Builds A House* was made by Bengt Dyme, who works with adult television, and *Night Creatures* is the work of theatre director Hans Dahlin. Neither of these two men has made any other programmes for children, or has any plans to do so again.

Who Cares?

An attitude one encounters frequently among the producers of children's programmes is that they are pioneers, working in an area which has been long neglected and which no one except them really takes very seriously. They feel that their divisions are under-budgeted, and that their work does not enjoy the prestige and influence of the other broadcast divisions. While at first glance this would seem to be belied by the \$9 million plus in annual resources, in a way they are right. Somehow, there just isn't enough money. This paradox can only be understood in the framework of the way television is organised. Perhaps a comparison with feature film production would be useful in this context.

When a film-maker in Sweden wishes to realise a project, he submits either a synopsis or a script, a list of actors and technicians with whom he wants to work, a shooting schedule and a budget estimate to the production company. All the people on the film itself will be hired on a freelance basis, the permanent administration of the production company being quite small. Even the Swedish Film Institute, which is state-controlled and which encompasses many areas besides film production, has a relatively modest permanent staff: salaries for the central administration amounted to approximately \$140,000 in 1971 out of a total budget of just over \$3 million.

This personal involvement in each project, and the closeness between studio and artist, has often provided an extraordinary degree of personal freedom for the director, while

minimising the division between the administrative, directorial, and technical sides of film-making. Indeed, Charles Magnusson, founder of Svensk Filmindustri, was also a cameraman, scriptwriter and director; Kenne Fant, its current president, started his career as an actor. This multiplicity of rôles, and the lack of a clear division of labour, were perhaps the most important factors in the early development of Swedish films—and one is continually struck by how exceptionally good these early movies are.

Perhaps an even more striking illustration of this sense of unity can be seen in an essay Bergman wrote in 1960. It is worth quoting at length: 'During the shooting of *The Virgin Spring*, we were up in the northern province of Dalarna in May and it was early in the morning, about half-past seven. The landscape there is rugged, and our company was working by a little lake in the forest. It was very cold, about 30 degrees, and from time to time a few snowflakes fell through the gray, rain-dimmed sky. The company was dressed in a strange variety of clothing—raincoats, oil slickers, Icelandic sweaters, leather jackets, old blankets, coachmen's coats, medieval robes. Our men had laid some ninety feet of rusty, buckling rail over the difficult terrain, to dolly the camera on. We were all helping with the equipment—actors, electricians, make-up men, script girl, sound crew—mainly to keep warm. Suddenly someone shouted and pointed towards the sky. Then we saw a crane floating high above the fir trees, and then another, and then several cranes, floating majestically in a circle above us. We all dropped what we were doing and ran to the top of a nearby hill to see the cranes better. We stood there for a long time, until they turned westward and disappeared over the forest. And suddenly I thought: this is what it means to make a movie in Sweden. This is what can happen, this is how we work together with our old equipment and little money, and this is how we can suddenly drop everything for the love of four cranes floating above the tree tops.'

What is of course important here is that Bergman didn't just 'drop everything'; the spontaneity and unity of the work was integral to the creative process. What is so delightful about this essay is its universality: Buster Keaton's reminiscences about his own film company are nearly identical.

This tradition does not extend to television, where the administrative structure is tight, rigid and top-heavy. The School-TV division at Sveriges Radio alone has 169 full-time employees. Of these, no more than a third work actively with production; the rest are administrators, accountants, secretaries, press officers, etc. Most of the costs in producing for television are used in simply keeping the whole structure afloat. While it is true that the educational division and TRU must produce part (but not all) of their programming on commission, the children's divisions of both channels are free to produce what they like. And yet the same pattern holds even there.

Even more distressing is the shortage of technical expertise. Among the producers, this is due primarily to an almost total lack of previous experience in film-making. Worst of all, technical sloppiness and bad production are excused on the grounds that the audience won't notice: after all, they're



Above: Swedish TV r's 'Krumeluren' series. Below: Hasse Alfredsson in Lasse Forsberg's 'The Christmas Calendar'



just children, they can't tell the difference, it's only educational TV.

Nearly all the upper-level employees at both Sveriges Radio and TRU come from an academic background, and most worked as journalists, sociologists or teachers before beginning in television. While many are intelligent people with a sincere concern for children, the effect of this practice has been detrimental on at least three counts:

1. Producers often cannot cope with even the simpler technical questions. This results not only in a sharp division of labour within the production, but also in a high incidence of unpleasant surprises when the film comes back from the lab. The best producers have tried to learn about film-making on their own; the worst simply feel that this is not their responsibility and confine their 'direction' to reminders that the cameraman should be sure to zoom in on whoever happens to be talking.

2. Most television producers come from nearly identical social backgrounds. It is still the case in Sweden that the majority of academics come from the wealthier classes, and since academics are so heavily over-represented in television, the wide range of experiences and backgrounds that one often finds in theatre or film is replaced by a bland homogeneity and, even worse, by a disconcerting complacency. This is often hidden behind a veneer of the most disarming liberalism or even radicalism. But it is here that the more frightening aspects of the Swedish mass media manifest themselves, and the stagnation of what is euphemistically termed the 'cultural debate' becomes apparent.

Sweden, perhaps more than any other country, has succeeded in grafting what at first glance appears to be radical content on to the most reactionary of forms. Thus school courses on imperialism, black history, or Marxist economic analysis are taught within

the framework of a monolithic and inflexible educational system; television programmes explaining digestion or the decline of the railways are made using the pedagogy of the Victorian nursery and a technique made obsolete by Edwin S. Porter; films documenting the history of the working-class movement are thoroughly engulfed in a morass of the most bourgeois sentimentality. In short, this radicalism—a 'radicalism' carefully pre-packaged so that it will appeal to a large mass of the population—invariably becomes an apologia for the status quo. The problems presented are very real and very important; the form in which they are presented precludes any action except through already existing channels and institutions. This is a step quite beyond what American liberals term the co-option of radical dissent. This is instead the castration of radicalism—indeed, even of social mobility—through its pre-emption by an invisible elite.

3. Very few programmes, even the non-commissioned ones, are the conception of a single person, and the fragmentation that occurs between conception and reality is nearly comic. The degree of individual autonomy that had been one of the chief joys of film-making in Sweden has been sharply curtailed, not only because of all the superfluous bureaucrats, but also because of a spurious kind of democracy which demands that every idea must be discussed to death in committee before a camera can be loaded. Indeed, this autonomy would be nearly impossible to attain even if it were wanted simply because so few producers have the competence to carry it out.

All these characteristics can be seen in two series which TRU produced called *Small People* and *About*. The basic idea is a good one: to produce a series of parallel films about young children which show them as people in their own right. *Small People* would be shown in the evenings and aimed at parents; *About* during the morning for the children. The series deals with questions whose range includes dental care, single parents, child-abuse, and the developing ego. The finished product, unfortunately, illustrates a great deal about the Peter Principle and precious little about children. The degree of insight that the producers achieved about small people can be illustrated by a scene in which parental love and tenderness are shown by having a father whirl his young child around to the music of a pop tune. The scene was shot from a low angle and backlit, so that the sun periodically strikes the camera lens. The expenditures lavished on this series are nearly beyond belief: the first four half-hour programmes (in black-and-white) cost \$32,000. When programmes are aired during prime time, they reach 3.9 per cent of the population. The help they offer the viewer is questionable: a child psychologist with whom I talked commented that they tended to put parents on the defensive, thus hindering the very situation they were designed to help.

Of course, a figure of 3.9 per cent audience rating leaves TRU rather vulnerable to criticism, and they have devised a defence of admirable ingenuity. They have hired a firm of scientific pollsters to test audience reaction in the most punctilious detail. Thus, for example, a study of the eye movements of a sample group of 5-year-olds indicates



'The Christmas Calendar': Claire Wikholm, Carl-Gustav Lindstedt

that between the 11th and 18th minute of a given programme, a certain percentage were watching the screen, some rested their eyes elsewhere, a few were wandering around, and others had left the room.

TRU has become something of a national joke in Sweden, but it is an expensive joke and beginning to wear a little thin. Much more important than the institution itself, however, is the principle it illustrates: how to achieve less for more, how to muffle creativity, how to alienate an audience. TRU and Sveriges Radio are important precisely because they are so typical of television facilities all over the world. The one unifying attribute of television today, commercial or non-commercial, is its centralisation, its rigid division of labour, and its increasing monopolisation of enormous financial and human resources. It is not enough to liberate television from advertisers: it must also be liberated from itself.

This state of affairs is particularly unfortunate because in fact Sweden is full of gifted and imaginative people who work with children. One is constantly surprised by the variety and scope of the ideas. Nearly every theatre, from the Royal Dramatic to the small troupes who give performances in the cellars of the Old Town, puts on children's performances, and these are often full of wit and spirit. The Stockholm Marionette Theatre has become world famous through its combined repertory of children's plays and avant-garde works. Very often, a group of young actors and directors will write and perform a children's play, simply because they haven't the money to do anything else. Not a few of Sweden's best groups started off just this way, and their work can be a delight. There is even a group that produces musicals for deaf children: they rebuilt their instruments with large resonating chambers so that the children could feel the vibrations. The Stockholm municipal theatre has been playing (to full houses) a sketch called *Bellman, Bloom, Baby and the Broad*. The actors went out into the schools and asked

children what they most feared—and were afraid to talk about. The sketches were then built upon the answers given by the children. The result is not only a very healthy example of children's theatre, but also a well-seasoned parody on Sweden, Inc.

And what of excellence elsewhere? Programming policy is shown as much by what is not broadcast as what is, and among the more conspicuous absentees is *Sesame Street*. Officially, the reason *Sesame Street* has not yet been broadcast in Sweden is that it takes a great deal of time to adapt the programme to the Swedish environment, and that it has not yet been determined whether it would be more effective to produce a Swedish version alone, or a common Scandinavian edition in cooperation with other Nordic countries. In fact, however, *Sesame Street* has raised a number of sensitive hackles in the educational and broadcasting establishments, and serious objections have been levelled against not only the programme itself, but also the objectives underlying its inception:

1. *Sesame Street* is based on an assumption of familiarity with television advertising ('This programme has been brought to you by the letter G and the number 7'), and its introduction on to non-commercial Swedish TV would indoctrinate a generation of school children to accept TV advertising as natural and right.

2. The programme is imbued with American middle-class values and ideals.

3. It assumes that pre-school children can learn to read, that they want to learn to read, and that reading is good for them. All three ideas are viewed with deep suspicion by a large number of educators in Sweden.

4. The pace is much too fast for pre-schoolers. Even if they could grasp intellectually what is being presented—and a study of American viewers indicates that they can—the fast cuts, slick animation and excited rhythm will create anxiety and a state of psychological ill-being.

It would take a fertile imagination indeed

to see how viewing *Sesame Street* could create the desire to watch television commercials. One can attack *Sesame Street* for its middle-class values, but then in fairness one would be forced to abandon the entire concept of educational television altogether. And naturally, the strictures against the American origin of *Sesame Street* have not prevented Sveriges Radio (or TV stations all over the world) from importing an endless stream of American situation comedies and melodramas.

Of course, a generation of 3-year-old readers will create grave problems. These problems, however, will be experienced not by the children, but by adults. They will be felt by school-teachers who will have to defend their monotonous and increasingly irrelevant curricula, by TV producers who will have to explain away the pabulum they now churn out, and finally by the caste of academics who even now are frightened by their own unmarketability and to whom a generation of highly literate and conscious self-educated children represents an unthinkable threat. It may not be possible to inoculate children against our new world consumer society, but the least we can do is see to it that they become conscious, critical consumers who are aware of the price.

The Wave of the Future

The TV executives are becoming sensitive to the increasing criticism directed against many programmes. One of the remedies they have taken is to hire feature-film directors to make children's series for TV. This process has been somewhat symbiotic: because of the current film crisis in Sweden, many directors have been unable to continue with their ordinary film work and have begun working for television instead. Some are genuinely interested in making children's films; others simply had no alternative. But in any case, a certain new pattern of large-scale production is emerging. Each of the two TV channels is investing quite large sums in the production of one or two major series each year. It is hoped that these series can be sold to foreign networks, thus recouping the extra production costs. The results are interesting and widely varied.

By far the best of these new series is *The Christmas Calendar*, which was broadcast by TV-2 from Advent until Christmas Day, 1971. It was written by Göran Tunström, features two well-known actors, Carl-Gustav Lindstedt and Claire Wikholm, and is a surrealistic adventure of a family wandering through the perils of modern life. The wife is very visibly pregnant (she gives birth on Christmas Day), and the parallel to Joseph and Mary is evident, although not forced. Lindstedt has a great talent for subdued comedy, and he creates the kind of character that is immediately likeable. The children who appear in the series (John King and Åsa Österman) are a rare example of natural and unforced acting; most child actors have their grins and cuteness assigned to them by the props dept. The series was directed by Lasse Forsberg, who became well known a few years ago when his first feature *The Assault* aroused a fierce debate in the press. It is a long way from the gray and bitter grimness of *The Assault* to the pastel *Christmas Calendar*, but one sees the same talented hand behind both works.

Distressingly symptomatic of the worst

aspects of syndrome 4 are two series produced by TV-1. *The Secret Island*, directed by Jan Halldoff, is a *Lord of the Flies*-type story about a group of marooned teenagers, and *Julia and the Night Father*, directed by Stellan Olsson, is an exploitative piece of fantasy fulfilment about a girl's adventures with her handsome young babysitter. It is interesting that these two television series are much worse than any of either Halldoff's or Olsson's features.

It would be impossible to leave a discussion of children's film in Sweden without taking special note of Kjell Grede, whose first feature *Hugo and Josefin* is perhaps the best children's film ever made. Grede is an intently serious director, whose work is not at all restricted to the genre of children's films; he has since made two more features, *Harry Munter* and *Klara Lust*. Grede's films are quintessentially Swedish, and his choice of imagery and lighting convey a deep sense of lost communion. The heroes are intellectuals at the same time as they are innocents; the gentlest and yet most serious of revolutionaries. One critic dubbed *Harry Munter* 'Prince Myshkin in the suburbs'. Grede has the ability to quote a Mayakovsky poem so that it sounds like a love sonnet—which to Grede, no doubt, it is.

A more thorough discussion of Grede's work cannot be given here. It can only be emphasised that his contribution to the sadly limited store of outstanding children's films is quite unique. Grede once described *Hugo and Josefin* as 'a summer vacation with two children and a camera'; and the film has moments (such as when Hugo steals an old

high-wheeler bicycle from an abandoned factory and goes racing out into the sunlight) of dazzling lyricism. Although no longer working with children's films, Grede has retained an active interest in all aspects of education. He posed a single question which perhaps sums up the whole dilemma: 'We begin with a group of bright, lively, insatiably curious and life-hungry six-year-olds. We then expend vast amounts of time, energy and money in the process of educating them. Ten years later, most of them emerge from the machine which we have constructed with so much care as frustrated, unhappy and neurotic adults. What are we doing?'

What are we doing indeed? A partial answer is perhaps given by children themselves in a list of 900 questions. This list grew out of a very simple, but to my mind brilliant, idea by a group of producers at TV-2. While organising their new programme schedule, they went out into kindergartens and schools and asked children between the ages of 3 and 13 one thing: 'What do you want to know?' The answer, not surprisingly, was 'everything'. What is surprising is the range and subtlety of the questions. To quote a few from the 3-5-year-old group: 'Why does one run a fever?' 'Why do we have courts of law?' 'How does a prison look from the inside?' 'Why do women wear make-up?' 'Who decides that there will be a war?' Plus of course endless 'How does one make' questions. How does one make glass? Pens? Airplanes? Ice-cream? Lightbulbs? Among the slightly older children, one notices some more personally oriented questions as well. Some of these are masterpieces of understatement

and wit: 'Why do I draw so well?' 'Why do I think everyone is so stupid?' One 4-year-old, with perhaps more prescience than most, asked the question (and gave the answer) quoted as the title of this article.

Quite clearly, it is not necessary for either schools or mass media to 'awaken interest' in children: that interest is already there, bursting at its constraints. What is necessary is to create an open communications net whose purpose is not only to answer questions, but also to enable children to structure their own education according to their own needs. Broadcast television, while by no means the perfect instrument for this purpose, could at least build a foundation by opening its facilities to the widest possible range of artists, scientists, workers, farmers—in short, to anyone who enjoys talking to children and who feels he has something of value to say. It need hardly be added that children themselves should be included in this group.

Television still pretends to see its function as 'awakening interest' because it is still used by society for the basically destructive purpose of baby-sitting and tranquillising. This self-imposed limitation of television's potential has enabled it to continue as the private domain of an isolated caste of professional educators, producers, psychologists and bureaucrats. The result has been to dull the very faculties of creativity and exploration it was intended to develop. The resources expended on children's film and television have been vast. And yet in no other area is the audience so underestimated, the opportunities so misused, or the potential so blindly wasted. ■

Kjell Grede's *Hugo and Josefin*: Fredrik Becklén as Hugo



They were shooting John Huston's *The Mackintosh Man*. The scene was a fight in the exercise yard of a prison, started up to cover a jail break by Paul Newman. The yard was an oppressive vista in the huge set that had been built at Pinewood, something of a masterpiece of the studio plasterers' craft. The jail buildings were thirty feet high; the outer walls some seventeen; and they looked as solid and mature as Pentonville. Everything was a merciless grey. The prisoners' uniforms were grey also, and their shoes had been carefully greyed with simulated mud. Even the leaden October sky above and beyond the vista of the yard seemed blue and brilliant by comparison.

The bleakness was pervading. The assistant director, who seemed totally in charge of the scene, was rehearsing maybe a hundred extras and stuntmen through a loud-hailer: 'Miserable now. Miserable. . . No smiling during the fight. . .' Ossie Morris, the lighting cameraman, anxious-looking at the best of times, was balefully eyeing a break in the clouds where the sun threatened to come through and spoil his lighting. John Foreman, the producer, sat by, a man evidently oppressed.

Huston, however, was undoubtedly having fun. He looked like a stage Irishman, though it was hard to say whether a flamboyant poacher or a disreputable landowner. He was wearing a crumpled ginger suit and russet shoes, a coarse grey overcoat with a cape and brown velvet collar, and a kind of tweedy deerstalker. He smoked a cigar. Sometimes in full face the deerstalker made him look like a First World War *poilu*. Talking with the crew he changed again, and was more like a genial priest-confessor, too gentle even to pretend to these infants that their naughtiness was sin.

He roamed about contentedly, and every time the assistant said 'Turn over' he gazed with the rapt curiosity of someone just come in off the street. Sometimes he would murmur 'Cut' himself, but so quietly that no one heard him but the assistant. He explained that the assistant was handling the sequence by himself. 'He told me his ideas for this scene, which involves a lot of people. I let him stage it entirely; then I come in. He worked all day yesterday and part of the day before. I play the role of innocent bystander. Until the last moment; then I make corrections. But the staging of this is largely due to him. I make not very significant suggestions.'

Beside the camera stood a large board, with a very precise camera plan for the scene, and a detailed story-board of drawings for every set-up. Did this indicate that his role as innocent bystander was earned by very detailed advance planning and preparation? 'Not at all. No. This was done by the people who staged the scene and then sent to me for approval. Just for this one scene. For my first picture I did that, made my own drawings from set-up to set-up. But that was because I didn't want to appear too uncertain on the set for my first picture. And about half the time, without directing them, why, the actors fell into those positions by themselves. And about a quarter of the time they had something better.'

For the last couple of takes, and for the succeeding shot where smoke bombs were thrown in to heighten the confusion, Huston leapt on to the camera platform (he was using two Panavision cameras for the scene, one fixed and one mobile). Then he resumed his role as looker-on; and talked meanwhile about his old films. 'I am particularly set on *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and it's only now beginning to become

appreciated. More and more people like yourself mention *Reflections in a Golden Eye* as one of my better films. And I quite agree. This is not a new experience. A number of pictures which I've made were not particularly popular at the time and later achieved considerable popularity. Designated as classics, whatever that means. *Red Badge of Courage*. It had no success whatever, critical or otherwise. Yes, it was received very well critically in England, but not in the United States. And I think *Reflections* will take its place eventually. *We Were Strangers* I haven't seen for a long time. I don't think I've seen it since I made it. I remember it. Of course I always think when I work on a picture that it's the best thing I ever did. *We Were Strangers* was based on a true incident. A lot of it was shot in Cuba. I liked Jennifer Jones in it, and John Garfield. It was a good cast; and there were good moments in it. Whether it was overall a good film I'm not sure; but I remember some excellent moments.'

He recalled films he did not like with the same sort of objectivity. 'There are some so bad that it would pain me a little bit to think about them. I wasn't responsible for a couple of them being as bad as they are. And for one I was entirely responsible. I regret that failure as much as any sin I've committed in my time. That was *The Roots of Heaven*, which could have been a very fine film. And largely owing to me was not a good film at all. The ones which were very bad films were in fact at one time good films, and nothing has been made of what happened to them as it was in the case of *Red Badge of Courage*. But they were ruined by their producers—in both cases I was away working on other films. One picture that is ghastly to look at today—and even when I first saw it I wanted to take

THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER

David Robinson



'The Mackintosh Man': John Huston on location in the East End

my name off right away—was *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (an awful title, by the way); and another picture that was very good, and spoiled beyond recognition, was *Sinful Davy*. I recommend you staying away from all three of those.'

'*The Bible*... It was an interesting one, very interesting. Unfortunately called *The Bible*. The title might have been a little more modest. Aside from the great falsehood, in so far as it was only half the Book of Genesis...'

For his latest picture, *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, he was full of enthusiasm: 'It was a joy to make. Altogether. I had a wonderful time. We had a marvellous time on the desert near Tucson. I lived in a trailer and the whole thing was done on this one location. It's a big picture. I don't mean just physically. It has a big spirit. The wind blows through it. Adown the corridors of time.'

The great veteran Hollywood editor, Margaret Booth, was credited as supervising editor on the film before that, *Fat City*, although twenty years earlier she had appeared as one of the baddies in Lillian Ross' book *Picture*, about the making of *Red Badge of Courage*. 'No, not at all. She was not a villain. I'll tell you a little bit about that. There was a complete rejection for *Red Badge* on the part of the audience. It was the worst preview I've ever attended: they left the theatre in droves. I've speculated on why that was. Maybe the country was in the same state of mind as it is now over the Vietnam war: it was the Korean war then. And I remember myself turning fast through the pages of *Life* magazine. And this film—though it was set back in Civil War times—was... the photographs were made with an idea of the reality of war, of combat...'

'So there was an attempt—I think it was a mistaken attempt—to save something. There was one scene, if you know the book, where the Tall Soldier, the Tattered Soldier, dies; and it was probably the best scene in the picture; and it was the scene that most people walked out of. So that was cut, and a few other things were cut. Maggie was acting on instructions, and the instructions were not all that severe. It was an attempt... it was one of the few times when cuts were made to a picture of mine that I could understand; and even be sympathetic about. I don't think anyone could have protested too much. It was under the pressure of public reaction. And it's very interesting, two or three months ago I had a request from MGM: did I by any chance have an original print, because they would like to put it out again as it was originally made...'

The script of *The Mackintosh Man* was still not finished, two weeks into shooting. It is by Walter Hill, and based on a novel by Desmond Bagley, *The Freedom Trap*. Everyone was reticent about the qualities of the original book. 'Every now and then a good novel is at least as good, sometimes better, as a film. Now and then an awful thing occurs, as witness such a picture as that one I mentioned, that I did such a bad job on. That was a very interesting novel. But novels that are something less than first class have often been made into excellent films.'

For a shot which was to show in detail the start of the fight, Huston stepped behind the camera himself. He lowered his great height to the viewfinder, removed his cigar to

relish a lengthy smoker's cough, and gazed for a long time through the instrument, before giving Oswald Morris instructions for the meticulous placing of the extras in the frame. The crew were slightly foxed by his placing of two figures in the foreground, talking together but back to back. 'Shall I put another figure here?' asked the assistant. 'Won't it look funny if they're talking and facing away from each other?' 'No,' said Huston gently. 'No. This man can look back over his shoulder.'

'It's not often I look through the camera. I know what lens they're using, and I know what it's going to look like... I direct actors about as little as possible. The better an actor, the less I have to direct. I want to get as much out of the actor himself as I can. Because wonderful accidents occur. I guide an actor rather than direct; expand a performance or reduce it. So far as the mechanical element goes—why, that's just being a traffic cop.'

'I choose an actor as a rule for his... no, not as a rule, but *always*... for his *kinship* to the role. I cast personalities rather than actors. Then if they're superior actors, why that's so much velvet. But the trick is also in the casting, your assistant director, and all the people round you. I look for them to be very, very good. And try to reduce my own role to its minimum function...'

'But actors. I've had a long acquaintance with actors because my father was one. Each one is different of course, and their reactions are not so given and sure as with a good animal, for instance. People always say that more time has been spent working with animals and children. I think quite the opposite is true. With any understanding, you know pretty well what an animal is going to do and by the same token what a child is going to do. Actors are a step or two removed from that simplicity and innocence.'

(Huston had just previously broken off his innocent bystanding to audition a beautiful, hopeless animal who had been brought to read for the part of a guard dog. Huston had sat on a pile of boards and watched with intense interest and patience and kindness as the dog had muffed all his chances, grinning, sniffing and leaping about in foolish gaiety when he was supposed to be attacking with intent to kill.)

'Each man that you work with is different. Some actors like to talk about what they're going to do, and I've discovered over the years it's not really to get information, or your opinion, but just to talk their way into it. Others do almost no talking. On *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, I don't suppose I addressed myself to Brando more than half a dozen times during the making of the picture. Just stood back and watched this phenomenon.'

'Now Paul Newman is full of innovation. He has wonderful immediate ideas. Very often supplements mine, or has something better than my notions. Some action, perhaps. The very best actors, the ones that fill me with admiration, are those that furnish *surprises*. You don't know—I doubt that they do either—where it comes from. They reach down into some remote cavern and come up with something that reveals a principle, something mysterious and new.'

'I don't distinguish between actors and anyone else. Just because they're professional, it doesn't make them actors. Some of

the best performances in *Fat City* come from non-actors. The trainer in that film is a director. Art Aragon was only a fighter, never acted in his life. The black boy, an extraordinary talent, a 17-year-old high school kid with whom they were having trouble in school. My God—this is a young black Brando! And the black man that as he hoes talks of wine and roses never acted. We gave him his lines and let him read—and they were his own.'

'There are fine black actors in the States now. Until this last experience, I had not been back there for a long time. And what surprised and delighted me most was the emergence of the black man. They are making greater progress than the whites of my acquaintance! I had seen a lot of them for the part of the girl's man friend; and they were all good. All very good, but a certain quality was not there. I was at the fights one night, at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. And a man came in with the right face; and he was quickly in the centre of a little group. They told me it was Curtis Cokes, the welter-weight champion. I went over and spoke to him, and said, were you ever interested at all to be an actor for five minutes? When I went away he said, 'Who's that? What's that guy want?' Thought I was some kind of a drifter. Then he came back to San Francisco in a week or so for a fight; and I gave him a script. He lost the fight; and read the script that night to me. And he was just perfect. There's something in that face, a melancholy and a worldliness and a cadence in his voice...'

The scene had moved on to a shot with Paul Newman, who was to move away from the crowd, under cover of the smoke bombs, to wait for his rescuers under the prison wall. (There had been an idea for a motorcycle assault on the 17-foot walls; but the stunt-riders were having second thoughts.) Huston watched, as happily curious about it all as ever; then went over and murmured a couple of words to Paul Newman. He watched the next take appreciatively. 'Just now—this is when you're really in touch with an actor—I saw the way that was done, and I said, 'Paul, try to be the invisible man when you come over.' That's all. That's all you have to tell him. He is really extraordinary.'

After a couple more takes he said, 'O.K. That will do.' But the cameraman wanted another. He shook on the track, and did it again. Huston watched with the same abstracted interest. Then just at the end called out, 'Paul, Paul! Look this way.' Newman was thrown, puzzled; then looked interrogation at the director. 'That's it. That's just the way I wanted you to do it,' said Huston, and shook with merry laughter.



When *England Made Me* appeared seemingly out of nowhere at Edinburgh last August, its cast and director British, its producer an American lawyer and theatrical impresario, and its locations and crew Yugoslavian, we expected one of those uncomfortable hybrids that could quickly be lost and forgotten. We were wrong: *England Made Me* proves coolly to have no doubts about its own identity. The film, which has now been acquired by Hemdale for British distribution, demands attention not just because it comes from one of the few Graham Greene novels not already filmed, nor because it's spectacularly well photographed by Ray Parslow, whose apprenticeship was served under such as Renoir and Antonioni, but because it marks the arrival of Peter Duffell, who has made his way purposefully through the thicket of television, Edgar Wallace second features, commercials, and one highly respectable horror film (*The House That Dripped Blood*), in order to work wonders with what he describes as 'the only project that has really meant anything to me.'

So much of Greene's work has been translated into cinema that one wonders how *England Made Me* (his fourth novel, written in 1935) has been overlooked for so long. Part of the answer, it seems, is that Greene was well aware of what can remain when film companies have ploughed their indifferent ways across a novelist's landscape, and he guarded the film rights with the intention of constructing any screenplay himself. His caution is understandable: with its shifting viewpoints and unexpected flashbacks, the novel is delicately phrased. It has an undercurrent of personal fervour, and its allusions to the British educational system are so ironic as to suggest autobiography from the very title onwards. Written in 'the middle years for my generation, clouded by the depression in England (which casts a shadow on this book) and by the rise of Hitler,' the novel still flows in a disturbingly contemporary manner, as if the Empire could even now be glimpsed disintegrating with a monstrous grandeur into the sea.

The story contrasts the two sides of what could almost be a single schizophrenic personality—Tony Farrant, a charming wastrel whose career has been an international trail of jobs abruptly terminated, and his twin sister Kate, who has worked her way tenaciously to become the power behind the most influential organisation in the country. As if in parody of these complementary halves, there are two further opposites: Krogh the financier, and Minty, the tattered journalist scraping a lugubrious living from what facts he can glean about Krogh's activities. Although the qualities of all four—stubbornness, deviousness, weakness and helplessness—turn out to be interchangeable, it's Minty who steals the show, a nicotine-stained Pandarus commenting on the shadowy political drama proceeding under his wistful nose.

Greene didn't after all write the screenplay himself, but it's difficult to find a point at which Peter Duffell's film would have conflicted with the author's version. Whole sections of Greene's dialogue have been preserved intact, and where small pleasures like Minty's encounter with his editor have been lost, there have been compensatory



Michael York, Hildegard Neil

ENGLAND MADE ME



Peter Finch. Below: Hildegard Neil, York



Below: Krogh and his lieutenant (Joss Ackland)



Below: Peter Duffell with Michael York



gains. Duffell and his collaborator Desmond Cory have shifted the location from Sweden to Germany, externalising but not exaggerating the reasons for Krogh's growing desperation, and providing with just the briefest glimpses of early Nazi activity the sense of imminent disaster that makes an essential parallel to the unstable relationship of the Farrant twins.

The film's master-stroke, however, is to draw out Eliot's *The Waste Land* from Greene's own adolescence and substitute it for the novel's Shakespeare/classical references. Gower gives way to the detached and omnifunctional Tiresias, Liz Davidge loses her virginity not in Coventry but Richmond ('I raised my knees/Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe'), and an extraordinary series of other echoes resounds through the narrative (what better description of Tony, for example, than Eliot's 'One of the low on whom assurance sits/As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire'?).

What makes *England Made Me* remarkable, however, is Duffell's achievement. Working on a tiny budget with an eight-week shooting schedule, he has succeeded in making an elegant, careful and unhurried production. The rhythm of the film, despite a few nervous trims which seem to have crept in since its Edinburgh screening, is superbly judged; no more than two long-shots and one close tracking-shot are devoted to what looks like an elaborate transformation of the Opatija beach into a French seaside resort of the 1930s; a Nazi parade stamps briskly by to make hardly a pause in Tony's pursuit of his new conquest; while what could have been a self-indulgent sequence as the Farrants row blissfully across Lake Bled is kept sternly short, chilled by the sound of a Hitler broadcast rasping through the mountain air. The whole sequence of the Krogh visit to the local Nazi headquarters is magnificently done: the shots through the windscreen of a bleak Cocteauesque road unfurling towards oblivion, the lonely figures of Krogh and his henchman pacing away from the shining limousine, the brief glimpse of a roadside camp with a watchtower and barbed-wire fence. On the brink of an abyss, the two men clutch each other for comfort and support.

'In Rangoon,' says Tony nervously after trying to help a woman who has been beaten up, 'there's a place where you push a stick into the ground and out come loads of insects.' The image lurks inside *England Made Me* like Minty's spider, captive under a glass. Nudged with a stick, the businessman retaliates with swindle and, if need be, murder. Nudged by emergency, brother and sister fight, embrace, and part forever. Nudged by money, the journalist abandons principle, settles for silence, seeing the wasteland but knowing it can't be altered. Duffell brings them to life with the help of a faultless cast—Michael York managing to ring effective changes on his *Cabaret* performance, Peter Finch as the uneasy financier, Joss Ackland as his devoted supporter, and Michael Hordern having a whale of a time as Minty. Peter Duffell seems to have emerged from the years of television plays and commercials to cap one good film with one memorable one. Greene should be the making of him.

Philip Strick

IN THE PICTURE

Looking Back

'It's a potential social menace of the first magnitude,' said Lord Reith, eyebrows askance, to Malcolm Muggeridge, sagely nodding assent. They were talking about television, a medium distrusted by Reith, perhaps because by its nature it demolished the valve-stoppered dignity of the Reithian concept of public broadcasting. The old and trusted Knoxian *gravitas* of a dinner-jacketed Broadcasting House was knocked about a bit by the brash electronic hijinks of Alexandra Palace. Amazing to realise that television, as a national phenomenon at least, has been with us for only two decades. Now of course it's part of the furniture, and only a social menace to Muggeridge and co.

Television reaches its age of maturity as the BBC celebrates its jubilee. While the party guests have been properly respectful ('It would be hard indeed to find any other 50-year-old institution to which we owe as much,' wrote Barbara Wootton in *The Listener*), on the air the Corporation's own contribution to its birthday honours has been notably frivolous. Someone up there evidently decided that a fiftieth birthday is a time to remember, and we've been bombarded with nightly nostalgia in the shape of quiz games ('Yes, that was Sir John Betjeman at St. Pancras station') and jokey reminiscences of mishaps at the microphone. As clutches of BBC men have gathered to celebrate the product, the consumers have been left to thank Reith and the programmers for the good times they've given us. 'Television,' said a face on the box recently, 'is a gift from God, and therefore a good thing.'

This verdict was actually delivered by the rector of Arisaig, a Scottish highland community which until 1972 has had no television. Now, with an enterprise

which Reith might have commended, they have erected a mast, laid their own cables, and invited the monster box into their homes. Not everyone in the community is grateful for this blessing; the local hotel proprietor sees it as a threat, because 'There's still some innocence left here.' The children of Arisaig, he seemed to be saying, may not like having the moon in their living rooms. These doubts and certainties were uttered on *Looking In*, a somewhat less than reverential celebration of the BBC years missed by the viewers of Arisaig.

Robert Vas seems to have been given a fairly free hand for his quizzical retrospection. If his film played on nostalgia, it was by no means uncritical; looking back not through a glass darkly, but also not through rose-tinted spectacles. For one thing, the viewers them-

selves got a look in, or at least a voice. Vas punctuated his film with voice-over comments from the man in the street, and compliments were countered by decidedly uncomplimentary indifference.

With the sure touch of the fine editor he is, Vas juxtaposed moments of television history with judicious selections from television's built-in comment on itself. He began irreverently, with an array of 'Good evenings' from personalities past and present. A Union Jack unfurled round an aerial, and we cut to Alf Garnett reading 'Clean Up TV' and Hancock bemoaning an evening without the magic box. Vas had thirty-six years of material to select from, and he found some gems.

Cut in at intervals were clips from a film celebrating the first heady six months, when a privileged pre-war few were offered seemly entertainment and enlightenment from 'the summit of Muswell Hill.' There, on the nine-inch screen, was a lady in an evening gown singing a celebratory song ('In sight and sound they trace/Pictures out of space') while trying to avoid the vase of flowers which someone had thought up as studio decor. Pictures out of space took us right into the moon shot, and 1936 looked like ancient history. As the programme kept reminding us, film now dominates television; it was startling to see just how static even programmes from the 1950s now look.

This was the technique throughout, as we jumped backwards and forwards in television time. For an hour of this ninety-minute compilation, the juxtapositions made a fascinating and revealing commentary on the nature of television as well as its history. Some of the contrasts were a bit facile ('They're God, and you begin to believe it,' said a disembodied voice of the people, and we cut to 1984 and the truth according to Big Brother); but mostly they worked succinctly,

prompting all manner of questions about the function and effect of the medium. A voice off talked of television 'balance' as 'a job for the Archangel himself', and we saw news film of an orderly picket line about which a commentator was asking us whether we could 'really afford scenes like this.' A priest asked the camera whether television intruded on grief by repeating it, and we realised that he was talking over a repeat screening of the Aberfan disaster. And for light relief, Pope Pius blessed Eurovision and ushered in the Eurovision Song Contest.

Towards the end, the film began to lose steam as it fell back on an anthology of famous moments and we were too often taken down a corridor of film cans. But Vas' film was a useful antidote to the BBC's celebration of itself, which has tended to be an uneasy mixture of snapshots from the family album and the kind of retrospective reverence which prompted a lady quoted in the film to remember Richard Dimbleby as 'epitomising everything that was English.' It would be interesting to hear what the new viewers of Arisaig thought of it. No doubt in a year's time the BBC will be telling us.

DAVID WILSON

A Hundred Years of Zukor

Longevity would not seem one of the more obvious attributes of movie moguldom. Yet three of the founding fathers are still here. Jack L. Warner, the youngest of the four Warner Brothers who opened their first nickelodeon in 1905, will be 80 next summer and will celebrate his birthday with the release of his latest production, *1776* (a Columbia release since he sold his studio in 1967). Samuel Goldwyn turned 90 last August. On January 7th, 1973, Adolph



Laurence Olivier in 'Sleuth', Joseph Mankiewicz's film from the play by Anthony Shaffer

Zukor celebrates his hundredth birthday.

Zukor, who still retains the status of 'Chairman Emeritus' of the Board of Paramount Pictures, is often to be found at the Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles. He lives in the present and is quite willing to talk about it. He thinks we should be a little ashamed of not making better films. 'With the materials, the resources, facilities and talent available, there's no excuse for producing bad pictures,' he said shortly before his hundredth birthday. He has said that before; but that's all right. 'I don't do much but I manage to be around,' he adds. 'I have the same interest in pictures—those that have been made and those that are to be made. I am as much interested today as I was fifty years ago.'

Zukor was born in Ricse, in Hungary. He came to America at the height of the Jewish immigration, a 16-year-old with the proverbial \$25 sewn into his coat-sleeve. He found work, at two dollars a week, in New York's fur trade. In 1892 he went to Chicago, where he became successful as a furrier and, in 1897, married. The Zukors had two children, Eugene and Mildred. Mrs. Zukor died in 1956.

In 1902, Zukor was back in New York and the following year ventured into the penny arcade business in association with Marcus Loew, founder of Loew's Inc. Zukor was among the independents who from 1909 fought the formidable Motion Pictures Patent Company. Long before it was dissolved by court order in 1915, Zukor, Carl Laemmle and others had found ways around the Trust (like making their films in faraway California, pleasantly close to Mexico when Thomas Edison's bullies turned up to smash cameras). Feeling the time was ripe for longer pictures, Zukor gambled big in 1912, putting down \$25,000 for the American rights to *La Reine Elisabeth*, Louis Mercanton's four-reeler starring Sarah Bernhardt. Zukor looked away from the nickelodeons and store shows and convinced Daniel Frohman, the New York theatre impresario, that even on celluloid Sarah deserved a legitimate showcase. On July 12, 1912, at the Lyceum Theatre, Americans saw their first feature-length film—and paid the unheard of price of one dollar a ticket.

'The Bernhardt picture proved people would sit through a one-hour show,' Zukor remembers today. 'I got hold of Frohman and Edwin S. Porter, who had directed the first movie that told a story (*The Great Train Robbery*, 1903), and we formed the Famous Players Film Company.' The new firm was launched with *The Prisoner of Zenda*, directed by Porter and starring James K. Hackett. ('Hackett was a very popular leading man, and theatre producers warned him he'd ruin his career if he appeared in pictures.') Zukor followed up with a



Adolph Zukor in 1972

remake (already!) of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, directed by Francis Boggs, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, directed by Porter; and lured Mary Pickford from her discoverer, D. W. Griffith. It has been said that Zukor built her a million dollar studio, and paid her as high as a million dollars a year to keep her in it. The two were to fight and make up many times.

Admitting that she was often a thorn in his side, Zukor says today. 'I was often annoyed, yes—after I had done so much for her. The right kind of publicity; pictures that people expected of her type and age.' On January 7th, the 79-year-old Mary Pickford is expected to be one of her old boss's well-wishers.

In 1916, Zukor consolidated with Jesse Lasky, who together with his brother-in-law Samuel Goldwyn and Cecil B. DeMille had made successful full-length features. Lasky decided to back the more organised Zukor instead of his stormy brother-in-law—a move Goldwyn didn't forgive until they were both old men. The consolidation merged Zukor's Famous Players, his two-year-old distribution company, Paramount Pictures, and Lasky's firm. In 1919, Zukor floated a \$10 million issue of preferred stock, marking the beginning of the modern film industry, and two years later Paramount was in virtual control of 500 cinemas in the US and first-run theatres in major cities around the world. Moviehouse owners combined to stop Zukor. The Federal Trade Commission stepped in and brought suit against Paramount for unfair trade practices. After eight years in court, nothing much was achieved, and the issue of joint production and theatre ownership was postponed for twenty-five years.

With the arrival of sound, Zukor found he had been as blind to the future as the Motion Pictures Patent Company in 1912. Lasky left the vice-presidency in 1932 and the following year Paramount went bankrupt, to be

reorganised in 1935 as Paramount Pictures, Inc., with control passing to Wall Street interests—including J. P. Morgan and Co., the most powerful financial group during the Depression, which at one point had interests in all the eight 'majors'. Zukor remained chairman.

As required by the 'consent decree' of 1949, which finally divorced production from theatre ownership, Paramount sold off its cinemas; but Zukor continued as chairman. In 1966, Paramount was swallowed up by the conglomerate Gulf and Western Industries.

All of which leaves Zukor mildly bemused. He has survived more than his share of 'terrible ups and downs,' as he understates. He calls Charles Bluhdorn, the president of Gulf and Western, 'a very able businessman,' and Robert Evans, the present Paramount production chief, 'a mere youngster.' 'Youngsters, all youngsters... When I think back, I myself was the same age as the present management when I started—around forty.'

Zukor is proud of Paramount's turnaround with *Love Story* and *The Godfather*, after the financial disasters (*Darling Lili*, *Catch 22*, etc.) which resulted in a \$22 million loss. He also finds it heartening that films now have a longer lifetime. 'Hollywood is gradually coming back. Don't forget the development of stars is a much harder and slower process than in the past. Also, not as many pictures are being made—what used to play three days, even in a small town, can now play four or five weeks. The exhibitor no longer has to buy a hundred pictures a year.

'Motion pictures are as necessary as wearing shoes or clothing or, for that matter, eating. They're part of our existence and they do a great service, for they give people the opportunity, for comparatively little money, to get out of their own world and into another.'

Happy birthday, Mr. Zukor.

AXEL MADSEN

December 7th

Gregg Toland, perhaps Hollywood's greatest cameraman, was a frustrated director; but the cinematographer of *Citizen Kane* and *The Grapes of Wrath* directed only one feature, *December 7th*, a documentary on Pearl Harbour for John Ford's Field Photographic Branch of the Office of Strategic Services.

Its appearance in the NFT's Ford retrospective, although disappointing to those hoping for a visual feast—the lighting is professional but seldom more—was something of an event. After only one 1942 Washington showing, the film was withdrawn because it reflected on the court case then pending over responsibility for the Pearl Harbour débâcle, and it has seldom been seen since. The Oscar-winning two-reel version edited by Robert Parrish and written by Budd Schulberg in 1944 contains mainly the scenes of salvage and repair, a footnote to the body of Toland's elaborate dramatised documentary.

Walter Huston's Uncle Sam, complete with star-spangled waistcoat, luxuriates in a Hawaiian mansion until Harry Davenport, the folksy Mr. C. (for Conscience), arrives to vex him with reminders of the Fifth Column in Honolulu, the evils of Shinto (Philip Ahn as a priest silkily misrepresents this gentle religion) and America's perennial unpreparedness. Recreations of the raid are intercut with now familiar newsreels of burning ships and their salvage, and Dana Andrews appears as the archetypal Unknown Sailor in two epilogues. In the first he summons the dead to identify themselves, and in the second strolls through a military cemetery with an anonymous casualty of the First War, discussing the world situation in terms of baseball. Having missed its chance to graduate from sandlot games by rejecting Wilsonian pacifism, the U.S.A. now faces the challenge of Big League warfare.

Since the roll-call of combatants appears also in *The Battle of Mid-*

'Ludwig II': Visconti with Romy Schneider and Helmut Berger



way, one of the few documentaries Ford signed, it was assumed he had had a hand in *December 7th*. Robert Parrish, Ford's wartime editor and now a veteran director, has vivid memories of this and other OSS projects. Like most of these films, *December 7th* was, he recalls, mainly a confidential production for the high command; Toland was also to have made a second film for general propaganda use. Sam Engel, later producer of *My Darling Clementine*, was producer/writer, Toland directed and lit the film, which operator Eddie Pyle shot. They left for Hawaii in February 1942, and some weeks later Ford joined them.

While in Honolulu, Ford heard through the OSS of an impending Japanese air/sea advance, and in May went to Midway Island with cameraman Jack Mackenzie to shoot the battle. Parrish, then a Third Class Petty Officer, was enmeshed in the resulting cloak-and-dagger movement of the footage, which Ford had no official permission to shoot, but he eventually edited it into *The Battle of Midway*.

'A few weeks later,' he says, 'Ford sent me to California with specific instructions to show *The Battle of Midway* to Toland and Engel. I knew both of them and hoped they would like it. However, when the running was over they got up and walked out of the projection room without comment. I went to see Toland and said, "What do you think, Gregg?" He said, "I don't wish to discuss it." What I didn't know was that many of the ideas in *The Battle of Midway* were part of *December 7th*. My guess is that Toland, Ford and Engel had worked out the story for *December 7th* before Toland and Engel went to Honolulu; then when Ford was presented with the opportunity to make *Battle of Midway* he used some of the same ideas that he had developed with them. The two-reel *Battle of Midway* was completed and ready for release while Toland and Engel were still editing *December 7th*. Ford is a realist. He felt it was important to get a propaganda message to the American public as quickly as possible. I think his idea was to cut through all the red tape with a documentary that said, "We're in the war and we've just scored our first major victory."'

Ford's involvement in these propaganda pieces has always been shadowy. *We Sail at Midnight*, a documentary often credited to him, was actually directed by Julian Spiro for the Crown Film Unit, though Ford may have added an American commentary. Parrish refutes the myth of a planned Nazi war crimes film that was cancelled. He edited this thirteen-hour report himself, with Budd Schulberg, and saw it shown at Nuremberg. He also confirms the existence of *Torpedo Squadron 8*. Ford assigned him to edit the footage about this air squadron, only one man of which survived Midway, into a short that was



'The Long Goodbye': Sterling Hayden, Nina Van Pallandt, Elliott Gould (as Marlowe) in Robert Altman's film of the Raymond Chandler novel

reduced to 8 mm and distributed to the families of the dead.

But obviously the bulk of Ford's wartime material, made for secret screening to the top brass, had even more limited circulation. 'He went to Midway,' Parrish says. 'He took a unit to Africa and shot the North African landings. He took a tanker to Chungking and was involved with Chiang Kai-Shek and Chennault. Ford never liked being an administrator. He would go out and do things.'

JOHN BAXTER

The Lion on the Wall

British Lion has fallen victim to the first company law of the commercial jungle: the fate of unprofitable companies is to be taken over by people who reckon they can do better with the company's assets. Thus last April British Lion was delivered by its directors into the hands of Barclay Securities, run by 32-year-old John Bentley.

It is not easy to run a company in a declining industry. All the major American distributors went through the bloodbath and came out leaner. They wrote massive sums off their optimistic valuation of films, chopped overheads, and, if they still had any, cut back on studios. In minor key, British Lion had, and could not face up to, the same problems. Being small, it was in a worse position: it never had enough capital to produce a continuing programme of films with international appeal, or—to turn the knife—the talent. Thus, with a smaller number of films to offer the hardboiled Americans, it had less chance of striking it rich with the one-in-twenty winner. In the great and good years when America swam in the pool of British talent (1966 to 1968) studio profits were buoyant (over £200,000 a year). But then the

Yanks went home, and the NFFC ran out of money, and film production started drying up, and what there was had shrunken budgets.

So British Lion decided to diversify. A sensible decision had they been successful in carrying out a difficult task. The board decided to offer ancillary services to the commercial television companies. Around £500,000 was spent on outside broadcasting equipment—at a time when there was severe overcapacity in commercial television because of the addition of an extra national networking company, London Weekend. This was done together with Hambros Bank, its financial advisers. Lion Television never made a profit, and the money could have been better spent on making films, or plastic gnomes.

Another diversification was publishing, a well-known financial disaster area. The former directors have, admirably, bought Davis-Poynter back from Lion for £40,000; in 1972 it lost £23,600. The best and most rational diversification was to buy the family business of Pearl and Dean from Ernie Pearl. It was bought in August 1970 for a hefty £1.4m and in its financial year ending the following month made profits of £236,000. But in the following year, profits slumped to a mere £3,000, which is a lousy return on an investment of £1.4m, on any criterion.

In film distribution and production, the company's *raison d'être*, losses continued—£57,000 on distribution in 1972 before the small matter of a write-off of around £650,000 on films and properties. The net effect of the mainstream activities and diversifications of British Lion in the year to March 1972 was a loss of £1m. The board had sought to merge with Star Associated

Holdings, the largest private chain of bingo halls and cinemas in the country, run from Leeds by the Eckhart brothers. Discussions started in November 1971, but, as is so often the case with private companies, terms could not be agreed speedily. So, in April, enter John Bentley.

What interested him about British Lion was: the 59 acres of Shepperton Studios, plumb in the middle of the £100,000-an-acre stockbroker belt; the film library; Pearl and Dean; and the stock market quotation. One of Barclay's directors, Jeremy Arnold, had been busy rationalising the outdoor poster industry, and Bentley wanted to take his profit. So the poster company, Mills and Allen, has been sold by Barclay Securities to Lion International (as it now is) for £9.6m in shares. In November some of these shares in Lion were sold to the public, which now owns 51 per cent of the company, for 160p a share. This compares with the 130p a share at which Bentley got control, and the 50p at which the shares were selling before the news of negotiations with Star got around. The directors have done well for their shareholders. The directors sold their shares to Bentley for 135p.

The crux of the financial dealery was Shepperton; Bentley had to unlock some £4m from it so that Lion could afford to buy Mills and Allen. But the NFFC, which half-owned and then fully-owned British Lion from after the bankruptcy of 1955 until 1964, when it was sold to a consortium of filmmakers, retained a special share, which entitled the NFFC to the benefits of the huge cushion of tax losses that had been built up. And also gave it the right to veto the disposal of Shepperton unless film-making could only continue there at a loss. After tough bargaining, Lion was permitted to do as best as it could with two-thirds

of the site, but the rest had to be maintained as functioning studios and ancillary services. Stages A, B, C and D and the associated dubbing theatres and workshops are safe; so are at least 200 out of the 350 jobs. Discussions are on with Rank to operate Pinewood and Shepperton on a more rational basis; but, as a tightly run small studio, Shepperton can probably now function profitably even if it stays on its own.

Lion is to maintain production of films to 'at least the same level as hitherto', and enough studios (and more) remain open to cater for the needs of the industry in present conditions. Perhaps the NFFC should have tried to collar some of the £4m plus that the sale of Shepperton will raise, as cash is needed more badly than studio hardware as raw material for making films and creating jobs. But John Bentley has ensured the future survival of as much film-making as there was, and there are £1.6m of poster and advertising profits to absorb the losses. This is a nice kind of writing to have on the wall.

DAVID GORDON

1972: Obituary

DECEMBER '71: Dita Parlo, shy bride of Vigo's *L'Atalante*; Roy Disney, brother of Walt and the financial brains of the Disney organisation; Max Steiner, Hollywood composer (*Gone with the Wind*, *Casablanca*); Stuart Holmes, ubiquitous villain of Hollywood silent films (*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*); Burton Gillette, pioneer animator and the Disney studios' first 'director'.

JANUARY: Maurice Chevalier, ambassador of charm (*The Love Parade*, *Love Me Tonight*, *Gigi*); Dorothy Comingore, Kane's Susan Alexander; Wesley Ruggles, director brother of Charles (*Cimarron*, *I'm No Angel*); Rochelle Hudson, Hollywood actress of long service (*Gone With the Wind*, *Rebel Without a Cause*); Hugh McDermott, Scottish-born actor.

FEBRUARY: Jessie Royce Landis, American character actress, often seen as disenchanted screen mother (*To Catch a Thief*, *North By Northwest*); Walter Lang, director of several lavish musicals (*Call Me Madam*, *Can Can*, *The King and I*); John Grierson, founding father of the British documentary movement; Alec Coppel, playwright and screenwriter (*Vertigo*); Lucien Hubbard, writer of early Pearl White serials, later producer (*42nd Street*, *The Maltese Falcon*).

MARCH: Marilyn Maxwell, Hollywood actress and singer (*The Lemon Drop Kid*, *Summer Holiday*); J. Arthur (Lord) Rank; Bronislava Nijinska, sister of the dancer and choreographer for Reinhardt's *Dream*; Bruce Bushman, veteran animator.

APRIL: Brian Donlevy, versatile Hollywood heavy (*Beau Geste*, *The*

Glass Key, *The Great McGinty*), later the first screen Quatermass; Betty Blythe, silent star (*The Queen of Sheba*), also appeared in over fifty talkies; George Sanders, suave master crook or sardonic wit of many a film (*All About Eve*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*); Bobby Howes, British musical comedy star of the 30s (*The Ghost Train*); Alfred Goulding, Hollywood director of over 500 films, including Laurel and Hardy and Harold Lloyd comedies; Gia Scala, Irish-Italian actress (*The Guns of Navarone*); Albert Mannheimer, Hollywood screenwriter; Alan Cameron, scenarist and gagman for the Marx Bros.; Dorothy Dalton, silent star (*The Flame of the Yukon*, *The Vagabond Prince*).

MAY: Bruce Cabot, dependable supporting actor with long career from *King Kong* to *Diamonds Are Forever*; Harry Joe Brown, producer of Budd Boetticher's Westerns; Dan Blocker, portly comic actor of film and television; Nigel Green, sombre and rugged British actor (*Zulu*, *The Kremlin Letter*); Frank Tashlin, talented comedy director, best known for Jerry Lewis films (also *Bachelor Flat*, *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*); Sidney Franklin, Hollywood producer and director (*The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *The Good Earth*); Margaret Rutherford, imposing British comedy actress, created Agatha Christie's Miss Marple on the screen; Asta Nielsen, Danish actress and star of silent films, including the 1920 *Hamlet*; Henri Diamant-Berger, veteran French producer and director; Steve Ihnat, reliable American character actor (*The Chase*, *Madigan*), lately turned director with *The Honkers*.

JUNE: Richard Day, Hollywood art director (*How Green Was My Valley*, *On the Waterfront*); Nicholas Hannen, British stage actor occasionally seen in films (*Richard III*); Paul Czinner, Austrian-born director who brought Elisabeth Bergner to the screen (*Dreaming Lips*, *Ariane*).

JULY: Brandon de Wilde, Hollywood child star of the 50s (*Member of the Wedding*, *Shane*), more recently in *All Fall Down* and *Hud*; Emrys Jones, dependable British actor (*The Trials of Oscar Wilde*).

AUGUST: Pierre Brasseur, French actor who starred in the Carné-Prévert films, and more recently in *Les Yeux sans Visage* and *Goto*; Oscar Levant, moonfaced, sardonic screen personality and Gershwin pianist (*An American in Paris*, *The Band Wagon*); Roger Furse, British stage and screen designer (*Henry V*, *Odd Man Out*); Tom Neal, tough guy of scores of B-films.

SEPTEMBER: Max Fleischer, cartoonist and creator of Popeye; William Boyd, silver-haired romantic lead for DeMille, later Hopalong Cassidy; Akim Tamiroff, Russian-born American character



actor, often as amiable rogue (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Five Graves to Cairo*, *Touch of Evil*); Edgar G. Ulmer, director of numerous films noirs of the 30s (*The Black Cat*, *Strange Illusion*).

OCTOBER: Miriam Hopkins, tough, buoyant comedy actress of the 30s and 40s (*Trouble in Paradise*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Becky Sharp*); Leo G. Carroll, American character actor, often in avuncular or professorial roles (*Waterloo Bridge*, *Spellbound*, *North By Northwest*); Mitchell Leisen, one-time art director for DeMille, later stylish Paramount director (*Midnight*, *Easy Living*).

NOVEMBER: Reginald Owen, veteran British character actor in scores of Hollywood films, often playing stuffy aristocratic types (*Queen Christina*, *Mrs. Miniver*); Francis Chagrin, prolific British composer (*The Colditz Story*, *The Intruder*); Sylvester Gates, banker and Chairman of the British Film Institute from 1956 to 1964, a period which saw the building of the National Film Theatre and the foundation of the London Film Festival; Richard Mallett, film critic of *Punch* from 1938 to 1972.

1972: The Top Ten

ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** FAT CITY *** L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** LUCIA *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER *** THE MOON AND THE SLEDGEHAMMER *** TEN DAYS' WONDER
—Jan Dawson

ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** THE CULPEPPER CATTLE COMPANY *** DELIVERANCE *** DIRTY HARRY *** FAT CITY *** JUNIOR BONNER *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER
—Philip French

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** DUEL *** FAT CITY *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev) *** A NEW LEAF *** THE NIGHT OF COUNTING THE YEARS *** THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS
—John Gillett

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** ANNE AND MURIEL *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** FAT CITY *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev) *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER *** A NEW LEAF *** THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS
—Penelope Houston

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** A NEW LEAF *** THE DECAMERON *** LE BOUCHER *** BLEAK MOMENTS *** LOVE *** ANNE AND MURIEL *** TEN DAYS' WONDER *** DELIVERANCE *** LA RUPTURE
—Gavin Millar

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** LE BOUCHER *** THE CEREMONY *** DELIVERANCE *** EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL *** FAT CITY *** JUNIOR BONNER *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** LA RUPTURE *** TEN DAYS' WONDER
—Tom Milne

FAMILY LIFE *** A NEW LEAF *** MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER *** A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** THE NIGHT OF COUNTING THE YEARS *** LE BOUCHER *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev) *** LOVE *** FAT CITY
—David Robinson

L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY *** LE BOUCHER *** THE DECAMERON *** EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL *** FAT CITY *** FRENZY *** THE GODFATHER *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** LOVE
—Richard Roud

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *** LE BOUCHER *** DELIVERANCE *** LA RUPTURE *** THE CEREMONY *** FAT CITY *** THE LAST PICTURE SHOW *** FRENZY *** THE GODFATHER *** TEN DAYS' WONDER
—Philip Strick

THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES *** L'AMOUR, L'APRES-MIDI *** LE BOUCHER *** OS FUZIS *** BLEAK MOMENTS *** LUCIA *** FAT CITY *** LOVE *** A NEW LEAF *** KING LEAR (Kozintsev)
—David Wilson

Left, above: Maurice Chevalier, Margaret Rutherford, Akim Tamiroff (in 'Confidential Report')



John Gillett

JAPANESE NOTEBOOK

'Very interesting place, London,' remarked Mr. Hisakazu Tsuji, friend and scriptwriter for Mizoguchi. 'My wife and I arrived in our hotel, turned on the television and there was the complete version of *Seven Samurai*—which isn't available in Japan.'

The BBC screening was, indeed, quite an event. Lasting about 3½ hours, in this original but previously unseen version, *Seven Samurai* now divides logically into two parts, exposition and battle, with the second half beginning with the scouting operation around the village. The new material is to be found mainly in the first part and in interludes between the final battles—small, cumulative incidents during the gathering together of the samurai. And a richer portrait emerges of their relationship with the farmers, emphasising the villagers' class consciousness and occasional cowardices, even at the height of the battle with the bandits. A particularly acute moment comes on the eve of the climactic fight, when all the surviving men expect to die and the farmers produce a hidden cache of food and wine for the delectation of the samurai.

Mifune's characterisation also emerges more strongly, through the linking of his poverty-stricken, unsettled youth with the plight of one of the village babies. In fact, the only new material which seems expendable is the budding romance between the youngest warrior and a village girl whose father has made her disguise herself as a boy—in any case, this kind of romantic

idyll never came easily to Kurosawa. A newish print, fresh and literate subtitles, and the overwhelming flow and vigour of the narrative, helped to make this a triumph for BBC2's World Cinema series. *Seven Samurai* incidentally garnered an audience estimated at about five million, perhaps the highest yet for a subtitled film on TV.

While he was in London, Hisakazu Tsuji talked to Eric Rhode and myself about his work with Mizoguchi. The portrait that emerged was a decidedly surprising one. For, after half-an-hour or so, it seemed that he was describing a figure as puzzlingly contradictory as John Ford, and a far cry from the delicate, filigree, defiantly aesthetic artist that most of the films suggest. 'He drank a lot and had a very foul mouth on the set. Not that Mizoguchi talked much—he assumed that the actors knew the script, and if they asked how they should react to a certain scene, he simply replied "look at the words".'

The scenario was clearly the most important single factor for Mizoguchi. Mr. Tsuji described in detail the terrible discussions which took place regularly whenever he and Yoshikata Yoda (Mizoguchi's perennial scriptwriter) began work on a new project. On being presented with a first draft, Mizoguchi would simply scribble 'no good, no good' all over it and hand it back. Other drafts would be given similar treatment (with a rare complimentary comment), until a few days before shooting began when



Mizoguchi reluctantly agreed to a script being printed. Even then, extensive re-writing would be done on the floor. 'He never told us what was wrong, only that it was stereotyped and would not inspire him, the actors or the audience; he cunningly forced us to develop our ideas up to the point which matched his. He was very direct: when the popular writer Matsutaro Kawaguchi was working on the stories which formed *Ugetsu*, Mizoguchi greeted Yoda and myself with, "Kawaguchi is so great, you are so small." I only remember him saying "thank you very much" once, which was at the end of *Shin Heike Monogatari*.'

How did the studio staff respond to this cavalier treatment? 'We did not resent it, since we understood his manner. But we were always surprised when we saw how good the finished product was. Then we forgot all the bad language and the arguments and thought next time we would have to do even better.' On his collaboration with the great cameraman Miyagawa, Tsuji was convinced that the main camera ideas came from Mizoguchi. 'He would sometimes shoot just one long scene a day, with five or six takes. This used to worry the production manager, but Mizoguchi would pass it off by saying the actors were no good.' Ford and Wyler were apparently Mizoguchi's

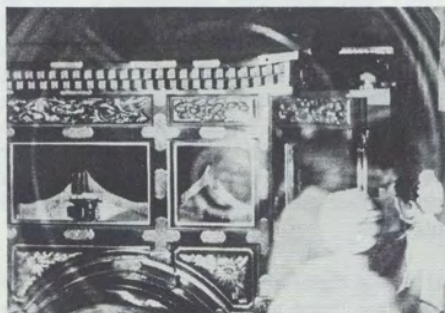
Above: Kinugasa demonstrates how female impersonators walked on stage. Photo: Nicoletta Zalaffi. Right: Kurosawa sweeps his set.



KINUGASA'S

Frame stills illustrating the style of key sequences in Teinosuke Kinugasa's recently rediscovered *A Page of Madness*. Made in 1926, this visually extraordinary, surrealist film is set in an asylum, and concerns an old seaman secretly trying to organise the escape of his mad wife.





A PAGE OF MADNESS



favourite foreign directors. 'I remember when I saw that scene of the samurai returning from battle in *Shin Heike*—that was influenced by *Yellow Ribbon* and other Ford films.'

Finally, we asked about those last great years with Daiei when Mizoguchi seemed to be summing up all his feelings about the past and produced his finest portraits of women. 'He was always a cross between a romantic and a realist. During this last period, I don't think he was influenced by outside conditions, he was interested only in films. It was his inner development—he had simply grown up. He had a special eye, but he never talked about his feelings. Somehow, we understood that and loved him.'

We talked about Japanese film history with Mr. Tsuji, who was a film critic in his early days, and were advised to study the silent work of Kinugasa, Murata and Daisuke Ito ('the first director to modernise the costume play and bring in comments on contemporary life'). Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness* (called *A Crazy Page* in some sources) coincidentally turned up as a last-minute fringe event in the National Film Theatre's recent Japanese season, and proved to be a remarkable visual experiment seemingly years ahead of its time (see centre-page illustrations). Like the only other early Kinugasa film known here, *Crossways*, it has a dreamlike continuity somewhat reminiscent of those textbook American and French avant-garde 'classics'. Then one remembers its production date: 1926. Although Kinugasa might at that date have seen *Caligari*, *The Last Laugh* (see the last corridor shot of his film) and the Gance of *La Roue*, his use of abstract imagery is more radical and innovatory. The film culminates in several hallucinatory sequences built up from layers of superimpositions, in which we seem to be inside the minds of the patients in a lunatic asylum as the real world dissolves around them into anguish and unreason.

A Page of Madness takes place almost entirely within the confines of the asylum, and follows the pathetic attempts of an old seaman, now working as a janitor, to release his wife, who has been incarcerated since an attempt to drown herself and her baby son. He dreams of their earlier happy life, becomes involved in an asylum riot, and, after the wife has refused to leave, resigns himself to a dreary life of sweeping and cleaning. Daringly, the film was made without titles; which makes it difficult for a Western audience to pinpoint all the interweaving plot strands. On a second viewing, the divisions between reality and fantasy become much clearer.

Nothing, however, can obscure the richness of Kinugasa's invention: a tracking camera moves down a corridor into a struggling mêlée of patients and doctors and then retreats back through the heaving bodies; the wife gazes moodily at a tree in the garden, which suddenly contracts as though in a fairground mirror; a girl dancing in her cell turns into an obscene blob as the crazy men ogle her. Everywhere images of bars cut across the screen, blurring and distorting faces and cutting off the inmates from the hard-pressed staff. The surrealist force of this imagery presumably stems from the scenario of

Yasunari Kawabata (author of *Snow Country*); yet the continually probing, moving camera and use of revolving objects suffused in a tinselly light looks forward to Kinugasa's later *Crossways*. The whole *mise en scène*, as well as the mature acting style, suggests a phenomenal sophistication for the time.

Made in a small, ill-equipped studio, *A Page of Madness* was understandably a commercial failure on its original release. Apparently, it lay unnoticed for over forty years until Kinugasa discovered a copy in his garden storeroom. Its recent reappraisal in Japan and Europe has given Kinugasa (now 76) a new lease of life: he has declared it to be the favourite of his hundred films and feels himself to be a modern cineaste again. Certainly, this discovery is a major event, confirming that the Japanese 1920s is yet another goldmine waiting to be opened up.

None of the recent Japanese films at the NFT provided anything like an equivalent revelation. But at least they demonstrated that, despite all the 'eroductions' and the TV competition, Japanese directors can still turn out quality films, ranging from feature-length cartoons like *Puss 'n Boots*, with its consistently lively animation and an awesome Demon King castle destined for spectacular disintegration, to a fairly commercial samurai drama like *The Red Lion*. Produced by and starring Mifune and directed by Kihachi Okamoto, this handsomely designed picture has some splendid battles and a masterly climax in which hundreds of peasants literally dance their defiance against their oppressors down the village street. Again, one senses that peculiarly Japanese exuberance in the sheer act of film-making.

Curiously, the firmly established directors provided the few disappointments—Ichikawa's *To Love Again* has already been lamented in these pages, and two newish Shindo films (*Live Today, Die Tomorrow* and *Heat Wave Island*) confirmed his failure to rise above essentially melodramatic scripts. More hopefully, we saw for the first time in Britain work by Yoji Yamada and Hideo Gosha, two film-makers in their forties who have helped to bring back some of the wayward home audience.

Yamada is known in Japan mainly for his phenomenally successful 'Tora-san' series of domestic comedies—a sort of fusion of Dales and Archers, but done with rather more skill and affection. 'Commercial Ozu,' as someone has called them. *Am I Trying* shows the awkward hero Torajiro almost muddling up his sister's marriage, and falling hopelessly in love himself. Yamada brings a drily witty tone to his family squabbles and there are some engaging cameo roles from old favourites like Takashi Shimura and Chishu Ryu. Ryu also appears as a doddering but resilient grandfather in *Where Spring Comes Late*, which deals with the emigration of a family to Hokkaido. Here, Yamada strikingly creates the feeling of a journey—by boat, train, car—with location shooting remarkable for its immediacy and precision of place. Casual meetings in the train, the suffocating and lethal bustle of Expo 70, the sheer weight of people everywhere the family goes, are finally contrasted with the open air calm of

the Hokkaido farm where the film reaches its slightly starry-eyed conclusion.

An earlier work, *A Trap* (1965), shows Yamada in a much harsher and blacker mood. Beginning as a straightforward *policier* about a young man who may or may not have killed a money-lender, the film develops a real Dostoevskian mood as the boy's sister implacably sets out to ruin the lawyer who refused to help them. Yamada's consistently fluent way with actors and camera is aptly demonstrated in the closing scenes set in mist-shrouded back streets (shades of Carné), where lawyer and girl take nightly walks as their cat and mouse game reaches its climax.

Hideo Gosha's *Tenchu!*, about a hired assassin who gets tired of being used as a tool by his revolutionary leader but can't escape his influence, starts off like any other sword-slashing melodrama. Its gradual shift into an allegory on the abuses of power probably stems from the intelligent scenario of one of Kurosawa's collaborators, Shinobu Hashimoto. On the evidence of this film, Gosha has a refined and varied visual sense—static, conspiratorial groupings with marvellous deployment of the 'Scope screen are contrasted with darkly lit fights in alleys and rain-flecked streets—and a flair for comic and dramatic set-pieces. Izo, the killer, runs all the way from one town to another in order to get in on an ambush. When he arrives, Gosha stages it with maximum ferocity. As bodies hurtle through screens or topple bloodily downstairs before a frenzied camera, one can see how Ito's influence still survives, for he began it all fifty years ago. Interesting, also, to see the writer Yukio Mishima playing the kind of samurai he tried to emulate in real life—and, more than ironically, committing harakiri on screen.

Shohei Imamura's *Legends from a Southern Island* came as a surprise after the quirky, small-scale *Pornographer* of six years ago. A three-hour epic shot on one of the southern Ryuku islands, the film is a strange, even bewildering, mixture of Buñuelian eccentricities, echoes of the backward family

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'Tenchu!' Shintaro Katsu



Ray's new trilogy

An interview by Christian Braad Thomsen



'Company Limited': Sharmila Tagore and Barun Chanda. 'The Adversary': the queue for work.

Satyajit Ray began his career with the poetic *Apu* trilogy, the study of a young man's attempt to find himself and come to terms with the eternal conditions of life and its two opposite poles: love and death. Ray's three most recent films in effect form another trilogy, the main characters being seen this time in relation to their work. It is a political trilogy, about how we are being shaped, and perhaps misshapen, by our working conditions. *Days and Nights in the Forest*, the least direct of the three, shows a group of city executives on a country weekend, away from the suffocating atmosphere of Calcutta. *The Adversary* returns to Calcutta, where a young man revolts against the inhuman conditions attached to his search for a job. And the third film, *Company Limited*, once more takes the audience round the other side of the desk to show the manipulations and status-seeking at the top of a big firm.

Company Limited was the opening film at the 1972 London Film Festival. Ray is now working on *Distant Thunder*, his second film in colour, based on a book by the author of *Pather Panchali*.

Did you consciously set out with the idea that *Days and Nights in the Forest*, *The Adversary* and *Company Limited* would form a new trilogy?

SATYAJIT RAY: I didn't think of it during the first two films. I made *Days and Nights* because I liked the story, and as for *The Adversary*... well, I made it because the situation in Calcutta was politically so tense. The students were very active, there was a lot of violence in the city, and if I was going to make another film it seemed it had to be about Calcutta and the young people there. Then last year I read the novel *Company Limited* is based on, and I immediately thought that this was an important theme. After describing the young man looking for a job in *The Adversary*, it was relevant for me to describe the people who have control over the jobs, the new upper class, the new breed that has grown up in India since Independence. You see, in a sense the British have not really left...

You seem in this new trilogy to have acquired a political awareness which was perhaps less openly stated in your previous films.

Possibly, but politics has also come increasingly to the surface in the last three or four years. You feel it every moment of the day in Calcutta: not just the bombs and the explosions, but meeting people and walking the streets with the posters on the walls. Of course I have never been unaware of politics, but I have deliberately not used political issues as such in my films because I have always felt that in India politics is a very impermanent thing. Political parties break up very quickly, and I don't believe in the Left as such any more. There are now three communist parties in India, and I don't really see what that means.

How have the three films been received in India?

Before I made *The Adversary*, I'd often been criticised for being non-political. After that film, they thought I had become politically committed, and it was very well received. There's a revolutionary character in *The Adversary*, which is enough for the more simple-minded people. They don't see the depths of the film, they just see that there is some mention of politics. But my previous film, *Days and Nights in the Forest*, wasn't understood in India. They thought it very frivolous because of its surface, but they completely missed the implications of the structure, which I think makes it one of my best pictures. It's a complex film with seven characters, and in its final form very satisfying to me.

I would agree that it's one of your best films. But doesn't the lack of a real storyline mean that it's bound to be rather difficult for an audience?

It's rather a film about relationships, and very complex in structure, like a kind of fugue. People in India kept saying: What is it about, where is the story, the theme? And the film is about so many things, that's the trouble. People want just one theme, which they can hold in their hands. I made the film primarily because I was fascinated by this aspect of people being taken out of their normal surroundings, and the way their characters emerge in an unfamiliar setting, away from their daily routine. *Kanchenjunga* was the same kind of film, and also misunderstood. It's also a very complex

and in my own eyes a very beautiful film, my only one in colour.

It has something like eight or nine characters, a whole family on holiday, just promenading one afternoon, two hours of their lives. But so many things happen. There are two daughters, one is married, and she's having a great quarrel with her husband, talking about divorce but staying together because of their child. The younger daughter has found a suitor on their holiday, and he wants to propose to her this afternoon. He's an engineering executive with a bright future, but his values aren't those of the girl. The father hopes the girl will say yes to him, but for the first time in this family there is someone who doesn't do what the father wants, and she turns him down. Then there's another young man from Calcutta, an ordinary middle class young man, but on the same mental wavelength as the girl, and there is a hint that there may be a future for those two. And there's the young son, a flirt and a totally frivolous character, who within the two hours of the film's time loses one girl and immediately finds another one.

But what interests me most in *Kanchenjunga* is the younger daughter and her new friend, who at one point feels that if he manages to please the girl's big autocrat father, then maybe he'll get a job. The father, who has five big companies, talks with the young man about the past, about the British, and the stupid terrorists who rotted in jail while he himself is still alive; and he does offer the boy a job. But the boy turns it down. He tells the girl that if it had happened over an office desk in Calcutta he might have accepted it, but here in this marvellous place amid the mountains and the snow he feels like a giant. He's pleased to be able to say no. For me, *Kanchenjunga* is an exploration of people coming out of their shells, and a forerunner to the more political trilogy. And that's what interests me in both *Kanchenjunga* and *Days and Nights*: taking people out of their ordinary surroundings and discovering the self behind the facade, what really goes on in their minds. There's a lot said in the films about money and values and security and how you accept immoral actions to reach your social goals.

The second film in the trilogy, *The Adversary*, got a lukewarm reception from some European critics, who suggested that from a stylistic point of view it was more hesitant and less structurally complete than your other work. You use a lot of flashbacks, dream sequences, and scenes in negative. Why the change of style?

Everything I did was of course quite deliberate. I think the main character always dictates the style of a film; and particularly in this case, where you identify totally with the young man. He's a hesitant character, full of doubts and inner conflicts and problems, and with him at the centre of the film I couldn't think in terms of a smoothly told story in my usual 'classical' style. I felt all the time I was writing the scenario that if it took a straightforward line and was stylistically orthodox, then it would be wrong. That's why I introduced stylistic factors which are new in my work.

The film opens for instance with the death of the father, shown in negative, and there were many reasons for doing it that way. The scene describes the death of a

person whom you don't know, and who is not a character in the film. It is a totally impersonal death scene, and death is very difficult to portray on the screen. If it had been in positive, everybody might have looked for signs of life because they are not emotionally involved with this character. And that mustn't happen: the theme must immediately capture the audience. So I started with negative, and since I had done it once I thought, why not do it again later. In the dream sequence I also find it perfectly valid; and I use the effect in another sequence, which might equally well have been in positive. That's the scene where a friend takes the young man to a prostitute, and he becomes disgusted and runs away. At one point the prostitute starts to undress, and she is just in her bra and lights a cigarette. Bengali girls don't usually smoke in public, and in India the audience is very conservative, so to soften the impact of that scene I used negative.

The problem with the young man in *The Adversary* is that there are a lot of

things going on in his head, and he has no one to communicate his thoughts to. For instance, he goes to see his sister's boss, and suddenly—bang-bang-bang—he stands there with a revolver shooting the boss. And then you find out that this is only happening in his mind. In fact, he had been rather polite and nervous, so how could I suggest that he actually wanted to murder the boss? There was no way other than an imaginary flash-forward.

Since people have become used to a certain classical style in my films, I knew the criticisms would come. If it had been the work of an unknown director, the critics would probably have accepted it. But I really don't care about the criticism, and maybe in five or six years when they see it in retrospect, they will find it all right. And I wanted it to be apparent also in the style that this was my first political film: a different film from what I had done before, so let it be different.

But still, you chose to make the film about the young man who has doubts



'Company Limited': Sharmila Tagore (above and below) as the sister-in-law; Barun Chanda (below) as the company executive



about his role in society, whereas his brother, who is a revolutionary, is a background character. If you wanted it to be a really political film, why didn't you make it about the revolutionary?

Because a person with a definite political line is often psychologically less interesting: revolutionaries don't think for themselves all the time. I was more interested in the young man who didn't have any firm political convictions and who wanted a job under no matter what regime. He thought for himself, and therefore he was suffering. Besides, he carries out an act of protest on a personal level, which to me is a marvellous thing because it comes from inside and not as an expression of a political ideology.

In *Company Limited* there is also a revolutionary character in the background. In fact, we don't see him at all, but we learn that he is the boyfriend of the sister-in-law, the character who is obviously the moral centre of the film.

Yes, but in a way the sister-in-law is in a tragic situation, because she came to Calcutta in order to find out what social success was like, and what her elder sister's life with her

to remain a human being in his circumstances. So she arrives, and at first everything seems all right. But when the crisis comes at the factory, he collapses completely. It's evident then that he can only think about his own success, his own career going ahead no matter at what cost.

But isn't it your intention to suggest that this girl, and her relationship to the revolutionary, really poses a moral and political solution to the problems the film raises?

Well, in a way she is in the same situation as the boy in *The Adversary*. She's uncertain, though at the end of the film she probably will go back to the revolutionary because she's so completely disillusioned with the other kind of life she has witnessed. But she first needed to be exposed to this kind of life in order to make her decision. I always feel that you must know two sides of a problem before you can make up your mind. Then you can make a really strong decision which, as in *The Adversary*, is not based on the dictates of an ideology but mainly springs from your own, human experience.

This is another interesting aspect of your political films, that they don't resemble...

...the films of Godard and Glauber Rocha and the rest? No, certainly not, because I still believe in the individual and in personal concepts rather than in a broad ideology, which keeps changing all the time.

On a political level, your films are strongly critical of the executive class, but it's vital to the films that you still try to understand the members of that class on a human level.

Absolutely. Even the British we had to understand, because the whole intellectual middle class of India is a product of British rule. Without the colonialism and the British education, there would have been no terrorism. The British gave the Bengalis a liberal education, which ultimately turned them into revolutionaries. And it's ironical that the British really created their own enemies. It took about a hundred years, and the beginning of this development is described in *Charulata*, when they start through newspapers to question the British rule. And in the early twentieth century you have the first terrorist movement against the British. That had no support from the peasants or the working class. It was a small intellectual group, whose leaders had read all the revolutionary literature, Garibaldi and the rest. They wanted to get rid of the British, and they thought: why not throw bombs at them? It didn't achieve anything; it was just an emotional gesture. But emotional gestures fascinate me more than ideological gestures.

In *Company Limited*, how far are you suggesting that the main character is essentially a product of bad social circumstances, rather than bad in himself?

It is certainly the system that makes him what he is. He's part of a bureaucratic and commercial machine, which has no place for one single man. If you want to live in a society, you immediately become part of the pattern, and that drives you into something you may not have been from the beginning. This man clearly has two sides: he has his private feelings and his conscience, but the system forces him to dissemble them

and to think only of his security and advancement. But it's an open film and it doesn't make any final statement.

If you nevertheless had to make a final statement about how to break up a system which distorts people, what would your solution be? You don't seem to have much faith in the revolutionary movement.

I can understand and admire Mao's revolution, which has completely changed China and achieved—at a cost—the eradication of poverty and illiteracy. But I don't think I could find a place in China, because I am still too much of an individual and I still believe too strongly in personal expression. Over the years, I have understood art as an expression of a creative personality, and I don't believe in the new theories which hold that art must be destroyed and doesn't need to be permanent. I believe in permanent values. That's my whole mental attitude, and I have to be true to myself. This doesn't mean that I don't sympathise with the young people, because I do... but at the same time I can see that when people grow beyond a certain age, they begin to have their own doubts. If something radical happens to you between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, then fine. If not, you are likely to become disillusioned as you grow older.

Is your personal background this rich, upper class milieu you describe and criticise in the new trilogy?

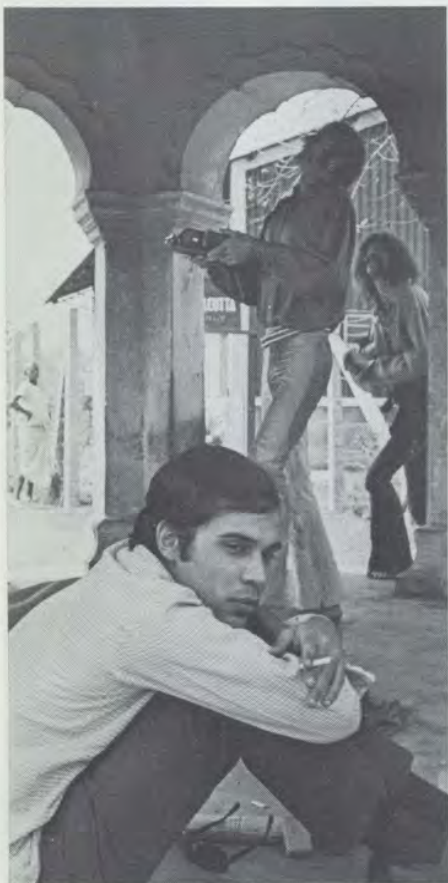
No, I've always stayed away from that sort of society. I have been very much of an observer and very solitary. The people who work with me on my films are close to me, but I have never been part of the group of people I describe. When I worked in advertising before making films, I had friends who were politically very active and supported the Soviet Union, but I have watched them grow over the years and they are now big executives in advertising firms. They don't talk much about their political position of the 1940s; but if they do, they try somehow to rationalise their development and their careers inside the system. I myself have been active as an artist, which is fine for me, although people say that I don't commit myself. Commitment to what? I commit myself to human beings, to making statements, and I think that is a good enough commitment for me.

The bombings one hears in *Company Limited*, from the big flat of the business man above Calcutta... are those explosions set off by left-wing groups?

Yes, and the irony is that very often they are caused by Left fighting Left. The tragedy is that the Left is split into so many groups, who are their own bitterest enemies. They don't fight the liberals or the conservatives. They don't attack the real targets, like the big industrialists, because they are afraid of losing. Instead, they attack each other.

You mentioned Glauber Rocha's cinema, which is usually considered as the political expression of the Third World on the screen. Coming from another part of the Third World, what do you think of his films?

I have never seen any of his films, because they are not shown in India. But I would really like to see them, because I understand that he is very powerful and outspoken. The young blood of cinema. Good!

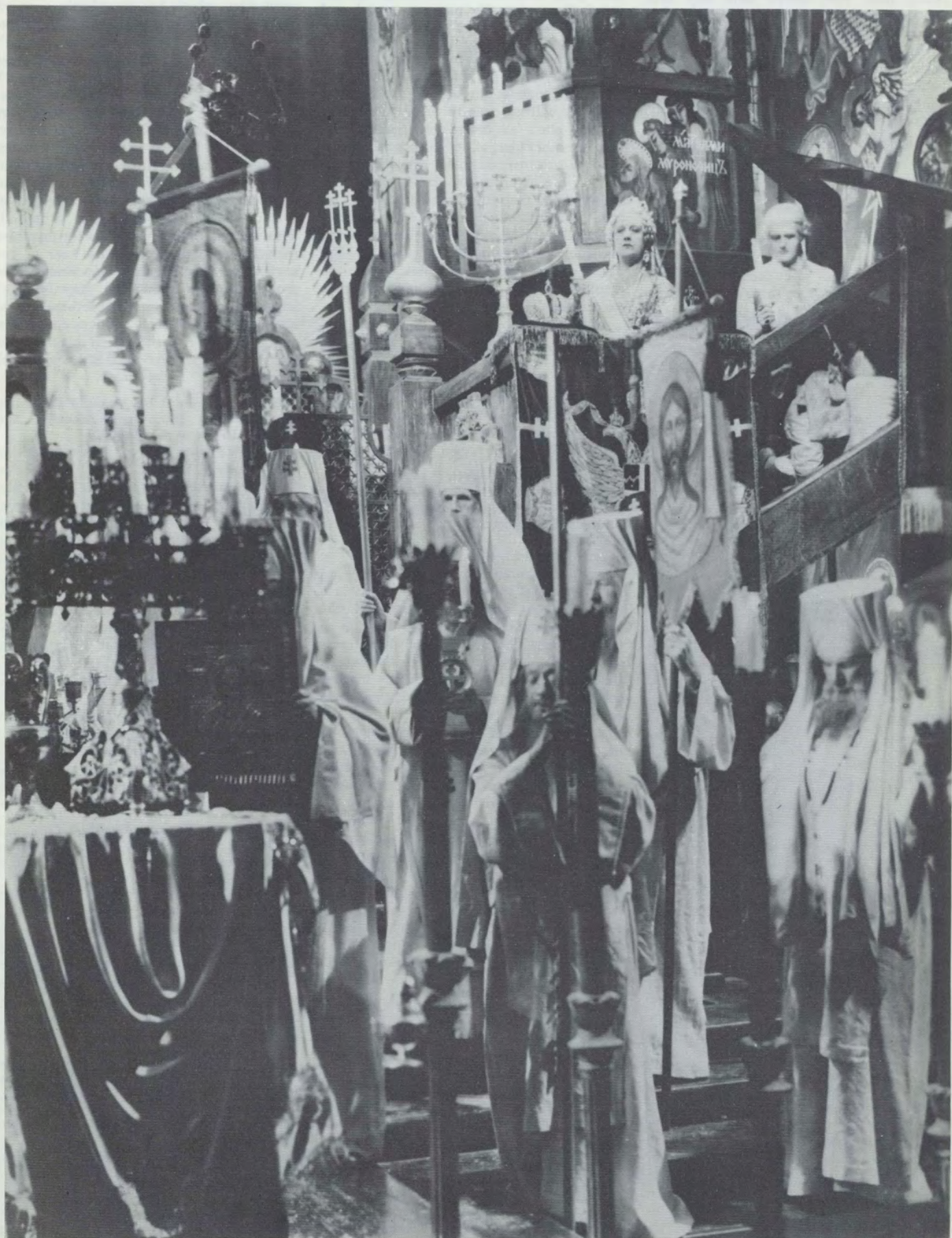


'The Adversary': Dhritiman Chatterji and hippies

executive husband was like. She's disheartened by what she finds, but on the other hand she is not so sure that she can go back to the revolutionary and marry him. She doesn't know how seriously involved with him she is. The brother-in-law asks her why she didn't tell him she had a boy friend. And she says: 'If there was anything, I would have told you.' She is in Calcutta because she had this great weakness for her brother-in-law, when she was a little girl in her teens. She hasn't seen him for six or seven years, and now that maybe he's such a success, let's see what he is like, whether he has completely changed or whether he is still a human being. Let's see if it's possible

JOSEF VON STERNBERG: THE SCIENTIST AND THE VAMP

Joyce Rheuban



Josef von Sternberg remains one of the most personal of film directors. A certain tension between reason and emotion, seemingly fundamental to his own personality, invariably informs his work. These two basic elements may be revealed by using Sternberg's own words, particularly in his autobiography *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, as a concordance to the images of his films: the words 'emotion', 'control' and 'conceal' or 'veil', which appear continually though in varied contexts, may serve as correlatives of his film style. Sternberg's words and films reveal an obsessive fascination with the inscrutability of human emotion and its ungovernable energy when touched off. In his narration to *Anatahan*, Sternberg remarks, 'We are ruled by dark forces about which we know nothing.' And, 'Typhoons in human beings strike without much warning.' He describes these forces as lurking within man beneath a composed surface. He refers to his subject, however, only in terms of control or concealment.

Between the lines of his autobiography and behind the images of the films, one may detect the constant contention of discipline versus indulgence; intellect versus faith or the inexplicable; civilisation versus the savage or exotic; and the tendency to conceal versus the tendency to reveal. Finally, there is the role of Sternberg as artist: 'scientist' versus 'vamp'. These roles are paralleled in the projections of himself in his characters, generally as man versus woman. Within Sternberg the artist and the man, the two sides seem to vie for ascendancy. In the films, these contradictory personal proclivities are externalised, personified to fight it out on the screen; and the conflict is expressed in erotic terms.

Sternberg's references to himself and his work seem at first hopelessly paradoxical. He repeatedly speaks of himself as a 'scientist' or 'surgeon' and his actors as his 'instruments', or the 'tools' of a 'master mechanic'. As a director, he claims the qualities of 'ice cold' emotional indifference, vigilance, objectivity, analysis, patience and control (defined as imposing order to create art from chaos). At the same time, he calls an act of creation 'a passionate prayer' and an 'act of love'. As a necessary ingredient in a work of art, he cites some mysterious and indefinable something which he finds elemental to everything in the universe. The films of this 'scientist' are as paradoxical as his words, in that they are highly subjective and emotionally highly charged.

Sternberg's work displays obsessively this tension between his volatile 'dark forces' and the imposition of rational control. He exhibits his fascination with the contention of reason versus emotion by working out the dynamic possibilities of their co-existence, both dramatically through his characters and visually in his treatment of the images. Confronting his preoccupation with emotion, Sternberg is threatened with the danger to his objective control and the possibility that, as artist, he may not be able to deal effectively with anything else. (His films of 'social significance', *An American Tragedy* and *Crime and Punishment*, are certainly well-crafted and interesting. They are, however, not nearly as beautiful, powerful or intriguing as those films in which his style finds freer expression as a manifestation of his temperament.) It is a paradox typical of Sternberg that the intention to control and conceal is subverted by its very application.

Dramatically, Sternberg conceals through ambiguity. He often purposely refuses to develop elements of characterisation, motivation or situation. Dialogue, particularly in

the films starring Dietrich, is conspicuously evasive, and delivery often stylised to a flat monotone. Large sections of the usually inconsequential plots are left to the viewer's imagination (as in the overlap dissolve transition in *Blonde Venus* from a shot of Dietrich ascending the stairs from the depths of a flop-house to the heights of fame as a Paris cabaret star). He makes misleading implications by suggestiveness of editing, or casually drops innuendoes by suggestiveness of dialogue and situation.

Another way to hide one's feelings is to laugh at them. Sternberg's sardonic sense of humour is ruthlessly unsparing. The resounding outburst of the impressionable young lieutenant who refuses to order the execution of Dietrich as a traitor in *Dishonoured* is merely an elaborate build-up for the punch line. As Dietrich stands before the wavering firing squad, she takes the opportunity to adjust her nylons and touch up her lipstick while the lieutenant's idealistic monologue is heard offscreen. *The Scarlet Empress* contains an extraordinary build-up to a very funny punch line. This is Sternberg's tracking shot to passionate violin music over the banquet table, littered with chewed bones and well-picked carcasses, on which the food is served up by figures of skeletons and emaciated martyrs. At the end of this stunning metaphor for the degeneracy of the Russian aristocracy, the camera settles on Louise Dresser as the tipsy Empress Elizabeth, crown cocked over one eye. She rises with some difficulty and announces to the company that she is retiring as she drunkenly wields a half-eaten chicken leg, until a courtier politely taps her on the shoulder and replaces it with her sceptre.

Sternberg conceals visually by means of intricate, diverting compositions of light and shadow, pattern and texture. He often literally 'veils' his images. He uses various textural and compositional elements and combinations of these elements placed before the camera—veils, streamers, nets, rain, smoke, glass, light and shadow. These are photographed by the distorting or diffusing devices of the camera itself—filters or gauze. The subject of a shot is often nearly obscured in shadow or silhouette, or is camouflaged behind foreground shapes or before a complementary background. The actors occasionally even wear face-masks. The effect of these various techniques of concealment, usually in some sort of combination in a single image, is further compounded as more than one such image fills the same frame in Sternberg's frequent use of long overlap dissolves.

What seems to have attracted Sternberg so irresistibly to his 'dark forces' is their mystery. It is interesting to note that ambiguity and abstraction are the means he uses to disguise his fascination with them. The dramatic and visual style he employs to conceal that with which he is impelled to deal actually results in an effect of emotionalisation. Indeed, he refers to his visual technique as an 'emotionalisation of space'. The very air is a conductor of the emotional charge. Rather than minimising the strength of attraction of the mysterious human drives with which he concerns himself, this style serves to enhance the effect of his subject on the viewer. Sternberg, the objective 'scientist' in theory, becomes Sternberg the 'vamp' in practice. He lures the viewer, tantalising him intellectually with the ambiguity of the narrative elements and seducing him sensually with the beauty of his images.

Sternberg is probably the cinema's biggest tease. He materialises this incredible vision in Dietrich and deliberately hides her behind veils, nets, masks, hats, fans, and any number of obstructions. In *Blonde Venus*, the theatrical agent asks Dietrich to show him 'what she's got'. As she raises her skirt to reveal her legs, Sternberg cuts to shoot the scene from behind a desk, completely blocking the famous Dietrich legs. When not obscured by a desk, Dietrich's figure is often hidden beneath a man's suit. Sternberg, of course, realised just how this affected her appeal. The sensuousness resulting from his various means of concealment is perhaps most irresistibly exciting in several orgies of visual delights: the 'Devil's carnival' of *Underworld*, the masquerade ball of *Dishonoured*, the Spanish carnival in *The Devil Is a Woman*, even the Chinese New Year celebration of *The Shanghai Gesture*.

Sternberg never exploits blatant sex or violence (as he could well have done in the pre-Code films), or maudlin sentimentality. He rather conveys an impression which is much more subtly and potentially communicative of sensual excitement or deep feeling. This is attributable to the intensity of his emotional involvement in the creation of the images. In *Dishonoured*, for example, the kiss between 'X-27' (Dietrich) and the captive enemy agent (Victor McLaglen) is seen in silhouette against a translucent background wall of frosted windows which bursts out in a dazzling play of light from the spotlights of the airfield outside. Similarly, the seduction of Hui Fei by Chang in her train compartment in *Shanghai Express* is provocatively played out in shadow and silhouette behind shifting shades and sliding doors.

In *Blonde Venus*, Dietrich's marital and romantic relationships appear rather austere, and the customary sentiment called for by the mother love-confession drama plot seems lacking. Yet Sternberg's emotionalising style actually imbues the film with profounder sensations than its stereotype formula merits. Though Herbert Marshall and Dietrich, as his wife, rarely touch, and kiss briefly only once in the film, Sternberg includes a long sequence of Marshall's departure on an ocean liner from wife and child in lingering, lyrical overlap dissolves. Or there are the extraordinarily exotic scenes in gauze-diffused, high-key lighting of a

ramshackle courtyard in rural Texas into which, heralded by fluttering white and speckled birds, Dietrich enters to entice the detective tracking her. The lush primitivism and rhythmic pace of the 'Hot Voodoo' musical number in *Blonde Venus*, shot through the dark outlines of overhanging palm branches, exert a strong sensual appeal. Even in *Jet Pilot* (Sternberg's only colour film), he subversively enters a gloriously lyrical sequence of metaphorical love-making by two jet planes soaring at supersonic speeds in a stratosphere of sparkling blue.

In moments of highest emotional pitch for the characters, Sternberg allows little of their outright reactions actually to be seen. But a paradoxically emotional effect is achieved by this obscuring of any direct expression of feeling. When Shanghai Lily in *Shanghai Express* enters her train compartment to pray for the safety of the man she loves, she turns out the light and only her hands are visible, eloquently spotlighted in the darkness. In the close-up of Dietrich in the wedding sequence of *The Scarlet Empress*, Sternberg focuses on the texture of the sheer veil covering her face. What the veil and her impassive expression conceal of her intense feelings at her wedding to the royal idiot, Peter, the flickering flame of the candle before her face reveals, as she steals glances from Count Alexei. And, at each increasingly Satanic instance of Concha's humiliation of Pasqual in *The Devil Is a Woman*, Sternberg implies that the intensity of the sado-masochistic passion aroused in him can only be imagined. Sternberg cuts at these moments to close-ups of Atwill, repeatedly shadowing the upper half of his face.

In most of the films with Dietrich, the only occasions that impress the spectator with their naturalism, against the abstraction of their highly stylised backgrounds, are the rare moments of straightforward passion, which burst like a 'typhoon' through the composed surfaces of character and screen. Even then, Sternberg quickly restrains their expression. In *Morocco*, Dietrich reveals how much she cares for Cooper, and how deeply she is hurt by his desertion, by throwing her glass of champagne at the mirror upon which Legionnaire Brown has left his farewell message. As soon as her arm lets go of the glass, however, she pulls it back and turns away from Menjou with her arms locked in front of her.

Sternberg will sublimate a glimpse of an unobscured emotional expression into an impression. In *Blonde Venus*, Dietrich, banished by her husband for her infidelity, returns after a long separation to see her child. In the final scene, Marshall and Dietrich gaze at each other longingly in rare, unobstructed close-ups until he finally moves from the opposite end of the crib to stand by her side. Just as they come together, Sternberg cuts away and translates the emotion of this moment into a divertingly beautiful abstract image of harmony—the heavily gauzed, softly luminescent close-up of the child's hand at the rotating toy figures of a music-box as its gentle lullaby is heard over the image. (This is actually quite an outrageous departure from the obligatory, often hysterical, scene of penitence, forgiveness and reconciliation called for by the confession-melodrama plot.)



'Dishonoured' (1931): Dietrich with Gustav von Seyffertitz. Below: 'Blonde Venus' (1932)



It would appear that Sternberg gives himself away in spite of himself: what most concerns him is precisely that upon which he lavishes his elaborate and loving attentions to conceal. It is more likely, however, that our ultimate discovery of him is as he intended. In his lifetime, he put on an enigmatic mask to the world, though in his work he lures and captivates one with the beautiful mystery of his veils. This Sternberg, the 'vamp', teases in his book just as he does in his films, almost daring the reader to try to uncover his true identity. The title for his autobiography was originally *A Guide to a Labyrinth*. Sternberg taunts the reader near the beginning of the book by assuring him that what has most affected him is not even mentioned. He defines his cinematic philo-

sophy as one which poses problems without ever offering solutions. Yet at the same time, Sternberg says it's all there, and invites the reader into the mysterious recesses of the two labyrinths—book and films—in search of him: 'To my students my work may have already disclosed all there is to say. For the plastic medium of motion pictures, though new, tells an old story, and no matter how concealed the purpose of a story, it is at all times indicative of its author.'

It is possible that Sternberg's book was prompted by his observation that perhaps he had disguised himself too well. That other inner need to reveal himself seems to have led him, in *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, to reclaim the emotions of his films as his own. He points out the absurdity of the fame and



'Morocco' (1930): Dietrich with Paul Porcasi. Below: 'The Devil Is a Woman' (1935)



fortune showered upon his performers for the emotions that were his. He repeatedly rails against the vulgar masses who never saw, or cared to see, beneath the films' surfaces; and against the players, his 'puppets', who he claims could never see beyond themselves.

In the erotic relationships in the films between man and woman, Sternberg dramatically externalises that tension within himself between reason and emotion. The leading characters generally correspond to the two sides of this dichotomy—that is, 'scientist' and 'vamp'. Both characters are Sternberg nevertheless. It is therefore understandable that their relationships are always, at one point or another, relationships of conflict.

'Scientist' is a general term which refers in this context to the character who subscribes to some sort of discipline. This character, usually the leading man, metaphorically represents the tendency in Sternberg towards reason, control, intellect and civilisation. Most of Sternberg's male characters do subscribe to some discipline, formal or informal. Clive Brook in *Underworld* is an erudite and verbose ex-attorney; Emil Jannings in *The Blue Angel* plays a pedantic professor; Adolphe Menjou in *Morocco* is a worldly gentleman who subscribes to a personal code of honour and decorous behaviour, while Gary Cooper subscribes to a military discipline; as do Brook in *Shanghai Express*, McLaglen and Oland in *Dis-honoured*, Atwill in *The Devil Is a Woman*,

Jannings in *The Last Command*, John Lodge in *The Scarlet Empress*, John Wayne in *Jet Pilot*, and the shipwrecked seamen of *Anatahan*. Brook is a surgeon as well as a British army captain in *Shanghai Express*; Herbert Marshall is a research scientist in *Blonde Venus*; and in *The Shanghai Gesture*, Victor Mature is 'Doctor Omar', the 'Doctor of Nothing', while Walter Huston is the efficient British colonial official.

Woman in Sternberg's films may be seen as the metaphorical externalisation of his 'dark forces'—those unruly tendencies that reside beneath a civilised surface. This woman is therefore essentially a being of charming beauty and irresistible mystery who can never be fully comprehended by the intellect. She is also potentially dangerous, because her powers are ungoverned and ungovernable by rational control. Sternberg fashions her as a stimulus to man's primitive desires and animal impulses and, at the same time, the very incarnation of those desires and impulses—elemental, pagan, exotic.

In *The Blue Angel*, Dietrich is a predatory animal who lives on love, ever on the prowl for prey. It is merely her nature, and no constraints of morality or conscience bind her. Her theme song is: 'Falling in Love Again/Love's always been my game/Play it how I may/I was made that way/Can't help it.' Even her name, which Sternberg changed from the novel's 'Rosa Frölich' to 'Lola-Lola', connotes a primitive incantation. The same sort of feminine atavism is present in the more stylised 'Hot Voodoo' musical number of *Blonde Venus*, in which Dietrich actually assumes the form of an ape. (The songs and numbers in Sternberg's films with Dietrich are always relevant.)

Sternberg seems on the one hand to acknowledge the natural place of this woman as a vital, healthy force in the often unnaturally well-ordered and lifeless existence of his male characters. Lola-Lola at first takes the place for Professor Rath of his dead canary. He is initially engaged by Lola as he blows on her feather skirt on the confiscated postcards. Later, he wakes up in Lola's room to her canary's singing as she cheerfully serves his morning coffee.

The male character has usually denied himself any such breath of life for so long that he is particularly susceptible to the excitement and pleasure of this charming creature's sudden presence. She becomes Eve, introducing or re-introducing him to the fruit of the Tree of Life. In *Morocco*, Dietrich introduces herself to Legionnaire Brown (Cooper) by offering him an apple, which we see him eagerly chew in close-up. He watches her and smiles, discovering the room key she has placed in his hand. This is just where the trouble starts for Sternberg's hero. He gets foolishly carried away, loses control, and forgets obedience to the law (whatever law Sternberg's male character subscribes to). Lola reaches in and leads Rath out of his little study piled high with books. 'Feathers' McCoy (Evelyn Brent), another 'canary', stimulates Brook as the ineffectual bookworm in *Underworld* to activity and passion. In both films, however, this birdlike creature is not so harmless. From simple disorder, her presence in the male characters' lives comes to mean trouble, danger, and eventually death.

From his entrance into 'The Blue Angel',

Rath is in a constant state of bewilderment, disorientation or dishevelment in the foreign milieu of Lola's world of cheap sensuality, and in her presence. He eventually loses his position at the school and his standing in the community; while, increasingly, he is now seen below Dietrich spatially. Soon he loses his self-respect and, finally, all self-control in the mad rage which leads to his collapse. Dramatically more subtle and of less drastic consequence is the way Dietrich disrupts, with a broken string of pearls, the stuffy decorum of the engagement dinner party Menjou gives in *Morocco*.

Even though the presence of Woman in Sternberg's films always means at least trouble for the male character, Sternberg nevertheless seems as often (if less overtly) to concede the naturalness of a union between his figurative beings. Pursuing the Biblical analogy, it should be recalled that Eve came from within Adam. Commenting on the departure of the one woman whose presence on an isolated island of men was fatal to half a dozen of them, Sternberg recites in *Anatahan*: 'Keiko had gone—there was no more trouble—there was also no more life.' The elements in man that, when aroused, Sternberg declares reduce him to the level of a savage, he also conversely calls that which 'distinguishes man from lifeless matter.' Brook and Dietrich are finally reconciled in the scene in the railway station in *Shanghai Express*, though Captain Harvey still complains, 'How the devil can I kiss you with all these people around?' Dietrich answers by putting her arms round his neck and kissing him, as she drops his gloves and crop behind his back. Even in *The Devil Is a Woman*, after Concha is responsible for having her hopelessly captivated lover, Don Pasqual, nearly killed, she leaves the man for whom he has sacrificed himself to return at the last moment to the probably dying Pasqual.

Eve evolves into 'Vamp' (often within a film as well as over the chronological course of Sternberg's films). Sternberg frequently appropriates conventions of the dated vamp-melodrama genre. Seeking the sanctuary of parody, he disguises with derision the sincerity of his metaphorical identification with the characters. Sternberg's variations on the ritual of the 'toilette' parody the archetypal vamp's fetish for personal hygiene and grooming. In *The Blue Angel*, this routine serves as an important feature of Lola's backstage repertoire, with the aid of which she enraptures the unwary Professor. Physical degeneration of the vamp's defenceless victim, ridiculously exaggerated in the landmark 'vamp' film, *A Fool There Was*, is nearly as obvious in *The Blue Angel* and *The Devil Is a Woman* (whose plots are basically of the vamp-melodrama genre). Near the end of *The Blue Angel*, in fact, Rath is commanded by Lola as if he were a zombie with no will of his own.

Sternberg's own version of the prototype movie vamp is, however, not so much the broadly characterised temptress who sets out to lure, seduce, humiliate and eventually destroy a man just for the fun and profit of it. She is rather the more passive, but highly persuasive, stimulus for the male character to destroy himself. Her irresistible attraction depends as much on the man's particular vulnerability as on her specific charms. This is why most of Sternberg's 'heroes' are of a

common type. Because of their inhibitions or previous self-denial, they are all the more susceptible to seduction, and often beyond that to hopeless, irrational obsession. Man, the 'scientist', is minus; Woman, the 'vamp' is plus. Opposites attract.

It is of interest to observe the fatalistic way in which characters of such different ways of life and temperament inevitably gravitate towards one another in Sternberg's films. Since both characters personify aspects of a single personality (Sternberg's), their attraction to each other over vast and small expanses of space and time might be interpreted metaphorically as Sternberg's 'split personality' seeking completion. On the other hand, if this union does not result in disgrace for the male character, there is always the conflict and tension which hinders its progress throughout the film.

In *Underworld*, the dissipated lawyer tells the gangster's moll that he's not interested in women, with a gesture of aloof dignity which only Clive Brook can execute. They each retire with a book (hers is upside down) to opposite sides of the room. Soon, however, each looks simultaneously over at the other. Sternberg cuts from close-ups to a long shot of the room as they rise to meet in the middle and, finally, kiss. This same magnetic attraction reaches across the greater distance between ship and shore at the conclusion of *The Docks of New York*, as George Bancroft climbs out of the hold of his ship and dives into the sea to swim back to Betty Compson, to whom he thought he had said goodbye.

From the moment Professor Rath clandestinely plays with the contraband postcards of Lola-Lola in his study (a scene which is cut to a close-up of the cards in his hand in most commercially distributed prints of *The Blue Angel*), he is irresistibly drawn to her. In a very imaginative sound transition, particularly for this very early sound film, Lola beckons him with her singing as the sound of the following shot of her on stage is briefly heard over the preceding shot of Rath in his study. He leaves to go to 'The Blue Angel', ostensibly to make sure his students no longer frequent the place. Crossing the distance between his rooms and the club is like a descent into the maelstrom. As he proceeds along the dim and narrow streets, an ominous foghorn is heard and a harsh-looking streetwalker suddenly materialises out of the darkness. Mocking laughter (echoed later in the musical punctuations of the scenes in Lola's dressing-room) follows him into the night. Later a black cat crosses his path. As soon as he extricates himself from the netting in which he has immediately become caught on entering the club, he is suddenly spotlighted in the crowd to compound his confusion as Lola turns the light on him from the stage. She sings 'ein richtigen Mann', as the audience laughs at the bewildered Professor. The whole drama is contained and foretold in this scene, as she unhesitatingly singles out Rath in the darkness. Later, the melancholy clown (the ever-present, silent omen of Rath's fate) is seen gazing in adoration as Lola sings from the stage up to Rath, who is sitting in a box above in the place of honour. A gradual pan shot up from the clown, past the voluptuous figurehead which supports the box, finally comes to rest on Rath, establishing the fateful con-

nection between the two men.

In the opening scene on the ship in *Morocco*, Menjou is first drawn to Dietrich through dark night and dense fog as if guided by radar. Fate itself is the agent by which Dietrich is introduced in *Dishonoured* to her prospective victim, the enemy agent played by McLaglen. She persuades him to bet at the roulette table on the number she suggests and wagers a kiss against his loss. The roulette wheel obliges with another number, which brings McLaglen to her to collect his kiss. In *The Devil Is a Woman*, Don Pasqual and Concha Perez gravitate towards each other as surely as opposite magnetic poles.

By imposing resistance to the instinctual attraction he has created between his characters, Sternberg communicates an almost electric emotional tension (or the release of that tension, as in the final sequence of *Morocco*). One such instance is that of the first kiss between Brook and Dietrich in *Shanghai Express* since their stubborn separation of thousands of miles and several years. The moment is, typically, impressionistically rather than graphically illustrated. Brook slowly draws nearer to her, narrowing the distance to the now small space and time between the meeting of their lips, on the windblown observation car as the train speeds through the night. At the instant their lips meet, Sternberg cuts away to the train whistle which we see and hear blowing off steam as a metaphor for the liberation of long suppressed passion. He then cuts to a long shot of the train as the mailbag is snapped off its hook before he cuts back to catch the finish of the kiss.

The blood relationship of Sternberg's 'vamp' to her prototype, dangerous by nature and evil as a matter of course, may be seen in his oblique and tenuous images of woman as, variously, black widow spider, black cat, or the ultimate *femme fatale*—Death itself. Sternberg's dangerous women are most often dressed, seductively but ominously, in black. In *The Blue Angel*, Lola-Lola sings, 'Old men, Young men, All fall into my net.' Sternberg's male characters are constantly being trapped, actually and figuratively, in delicate nets and veils. Passion and violence are played out against a surface textured by them. The black cat is initially identified with Woman in his first film, *The Salvation Hunters*. The single image which best signifies his incarnation of his intriguing but deadly 'dark forces' is the remarkable superimposition in *Dishonoured* of Dietrich's face over a shot of her black cat. The separate shots are indistinguishable as they merge to create the single image of a strange but beautiful creature—half human, half feline. The creature's mysterious beauty simultaneously suggests its dangerous significance; the implication of danger, in turn, enhances its beauty.

The inevitable connection of beauty with danger in Sternberg's Woman leads unavoidably to the motifs (again paradoxical) of love and hate and love and death. The love/hate motif is expressed primarily in the man's self-destructive response of intensified attraction as the 'vamp' becomes more dangerous, more powerful and sadistic. Lola's song in *The Blue Angel* warns, 'Beware of Blonde Women', with its admonition, 'You are courting danger.' The obviously



Sam Jaffe amid the stylised sets of *'The Scarlet Empress'* (1934)

sado-masochistic attraction between Concha and Don Pasqual is a far cry from, but nevertheless a direct descendant of, the initial merely pleasantly disturbing excitement of dormant feelings. After 'courting danger', one mates with death. Immediately after meeting Dietrich in *Dishonoured*, McLaglen feels he must tell her, 'I see Death as a beautiful woman wearing flowers.' In *Shanghai Express*, Dietrich is 'Shanghai Lily—the notorious white flower of China . . . who's wrecked the lives of a dozen men up and down the China coast.' Sternberg narrates also in *Anatahan*: 'Death was fishing in this jungle and on his hook as bait he dangled Keiko.' And, in a scene preserved in the rushes of the unfinished *I Claudius*, the demented Emperor Caligula pronounces to Claudius, 'I sentence you to death in the most beautiful possible way.' Claudius' sentence is marriage to Messalina.

Extraordinary as Sternberg's 'vamp' is, his female characterisation transcends this superficial classification. She becomes a sort of Superwoman, incredibly potent in the combination of feminine beauty and charm with the strength of a man. Sternberg's 'Lesbian accents', including Dietrich's frequent adoption of masculine attire and mannerisms, in addition to enhancing her aura of ambiguity, may also be explained as a suggestion of her omni-sexuality. This is appropriate for Sternberg's heroine, since this is not really a woman of flesh and blood but an externalisation best personified in the feminine form of something within Sternberg himself. This hypothesis would also justify the stylised similarity of the delivery of dialogue between man and woman in the love scenes, in the films with Dietrich particularly, as well as the physical austerity of the relationships in his films.

The woman is generally at least an equal match for the man in the conflict at hand between reason and emotion. The characters

often set out at the beginning of a film as in a contest, by shaking hands or sizing each other up with a glance. Often this Superwoman is stronger than the man, since she has access to additional weapons. (It may be noted that after Lola destroys the Professor in *The Blue Angel*, she takes on no less an opponent than Mazeppa, the Strong Man.) In *Dishonoured*, McLaglen does not mind so much being captured by 'X-27', for this is 'all in the game', as he does the means she employs. He tells her, 'You trick men into death with your body . . . You put something into war that doesn't belong there. If I stay, I'm not only in danger of losing my life but of falling in love with you, you devil.'

For this extraordinary woman, sexual power is translated into military and political power. The motif of love and war in Sternberg's films relates of course to that of love and hate and love and death. Menjou describes his engagement to Dietrich in *Morocco* as 'the unconditional surrender of the most exacting bachelor in the world.' Oland, the traitor, surrenders his sword to the seductive spy in *Dishonoured*; Dietrich and Brook compare 'medals' in *Shanghai Express*; Catherine 'adds the Army to her list of conquests' in *The Scarlet Empress*. Correspondingly, in *Anatahan* Sternberg talks of his 'dark forces' in similar terms: 'How could we know that we brought the enemy with us—in our own bodies. An enemy that would attack without notice.'

For a director as personal as Sternberg, all the preoccupations and motifs that we see in his films are intricately and inextricably related to the way he shows them to us—that is, his style. We have attempted therefore to decipher what is behind the images by keeping in mind the code of the style in which he presents them. The cinematic evolution of Sternberg's Woman and her relationships with the male characters may

serve thereby as an index to the condition of his own psychological and artistic relationship to the tendencies the characters embody. A particularly convenient case study in an assessment of this evolution is that of Marlene Dietrich.

Sternberg was at first delighted with Dietrich as a 'perfect medium'; he describes her as the most malleable and manipulated of his creative materials. Perhaps he also recognised (as he seems to have done immediately) her likeness to himself. He admits having been struck initially by her inclination to 'jeer at herself and at others', her air of 'cold disdain', 'impressive poise', 'indifference' and 'apathy'. Yet Sternberg must have detected the promise of an inner fire beneath that enigmatic exterior. He knew exactly what he wanted in the women of his films before and after his personal and professional relationship with Dietrich. Dietrich was exactly what Sternberg wanted.

As far as Sternberg was concerned, Dietrich may have proven too perfect a vessel for what he felt the need to express. He reveals at times the feeling that he was tempted by the extraordinary opportunity she offered into an obsessive fixation for using her to express those 'dark' forces, and to dramatise the psychic tension of his relationship to them. He perhaps felt that in succumbing to the temptation of a perfect medium (Dietrich) for the projection of his personal preoccupations, he had lost the objective control he theoretically insisted on and, with it, the ability to apply himself artistically to other themes. To Sternberg, Dietrich seems to have taken on the ominous proportions of the classical Expressionist 'Vampire'—the parasitic force in the form of a beautiful woman who drains the hopelessly fascinated artist of his life and creativity.

Sternberg's accounts of his own actual artistic association with Dietrich, and the parallel fantasy projections of 'scientist' and 'vamp' of his films, coincide quite obligingly at times. He relates that from his third film with Dietrich he repeatedly attempted to terminate their professional association. 'I had made up my mind to stop painting the lily, and I told her so. But I had not anticipated her reaction.' Each time, it seems, the 'puppet' begged him to pull her strings once more.

Four films after Sternberg says he first expressed his desire to discontinue working with her, Lionel Atwill (his virtual double), as Don Pasqual in the last film with Dietrich, says of his relationship with Concha Perez: 'There were only two ways out—either leave her or kill her. I chose a third.' The fatalistic attraction of his male characters to the alluring mysteries the Dietrich character represents corresponds to Sternberg's own inability to say 'No'—less to Dietrich herself than to the 'perfect medium' she offered.

His protestations offscreen against being forced to 'plagiarise' himself become suspect when one sees the seven films in which he lavished his unsparing attentions to create this 'alluring enigma'. Analogously in *The Devil Is a Woman*, Atwill rails against Concha Perez in the framing story as he relates the sad account of his downfall at her hands to his young friend (Cesar Romero). As Atwill's forbidding recollections dissolve into the flashback, the audience learns that

he warns Romero against her because he still desires her himself. Atwill introduces one episode by noting that he was called officially to a certain city, adding, 'And it was my bad luck to run into her once more.' Into the flashback itself, we find Pasqual sitting in the café where Concha is singing. As she nears him, he grabs her hand and pleads with her, admitting, 'I've looked for you so long.'

Sternberg as the objective 'scientist' claims in his autobiography that he proposed in his films (though 'touched on lightly' in most) to warn the viewer of the danger of unguided emotions, and maintains that 'art can serve to remind man that he is no longer a savage.' But how is this to be done when he himself refers to his cinematic creation of Dietrich as a 'pictorial aphrodisiac'? Like Professor Rath, blissful accessory to his own destruction by eagerly serving Lola in the application of her make-up, Sternberg paints her irresistibly. The more beautiful she becomes, the more dangerous, and vice versa. When Don Pasqual warns his friend against Concha he tells him, 'She's the most dangerous woman you'll ever meet.' If anything, this sends Romero directly to her.

The prolonged association with Dietrich eventually brings critics to refer to Sternberg with epithets such as 'a fool for femmes'. This was perhaps too close for comfort to his own apprehensions about objective control giving way to subjective indulgence. As the tension between reason and emotion seems to have increased while working with Dietrich, so does the correlative tension between revealing and concealing. Sternberg seems to reinforce his defences in the last films with Dietrich by 'completely subjecting' his 'bird of paradise' to his camouflaging stylisation of visual treatment, dramatic ambiguity and absurd, self-mocking humour.

Analogous to Don Pasqual's self-defeating warning to Romero against Concha is Sternberg's increased stylisation in these two films: *The Scarlet Empress* and *The Devil Is a Woman*. He only further enhances his Superwoman's fascination for the viewer, and her lethal power in the contexts of the films. As Catherine tells the Archimandrite, 'I have ways far more powerful than any political machine.' With Catherine's exhilarating ascent up the palace steps, Sternberg's 'vamp' is raised to a position of unparalleled political and sexual potency. She is a lascivious fiend in the final shot at the head of the stairs—dressed in a cavalry uniform, posed in a two-shot with her stallion. Sternberg's allusion to Catherine's purported sodomous inclinations (among others in the film) implies here that the stallion is now her only suitable mate. The harmless 'canary' has become, in *The Scarlet Empress*, the monstrous two-headed eagle which looms ferociously over the Imperial throne.

From *The Scarlet Empress*, the isolated moments of naturalistically identifiable emotion which occasionally punctuated the stylised surfaces of previous films with Dietrich are presented now as perversity, parody, or even burlesque. Characterisations become even more highly abstracted or are outright caricatures (as is Ruthelma Stevens as Peter's malevolently mugging mistress, Catherine's 'rival'). The players are frequently lost in the decor. Sternberg's humour in this film is very dark indeed.

From *Angel* to *Devil*, the foreshadowing figure of the melancholy clown becomes the goose Concha holds as Pasqual holds her in their first confrontation. The vital creature that Dietrich is in Lola, responding without inhibition to her natural desires, becomes the sadistic devil, Concha Perez, who acts ruthlessly upon her perverse impulses. Sternberg seems to have found himself somewhat in the unfortunate position of Dr. Jekyll, that scientist who, after succeeding in isolating the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of his personality, finally becomes completely overwhelmed by the monstrous Mr. Hyde.

If the films' stylistic development charts for us the pressures of Sternberg's psychic tensions, then the appearance of dolls in the images of these films provides a running commentary to this development. He seems to try to assure himself of his autonomy over his 'puppets' (his actors) by frequently placing all sorts of dolls in the hands or at the mercy of the curious or vengeful male characters. Although in *Devil*, Atwill woe-fully tells Romero of his experience with Concha as he holds up a cardboard toy man and makes it dance. (*The Devil Is a Woman* is an adaptation of a novel called *Woman and Puppet*, and a remake of a 'vamp' film of 1920 of the same name.) Correspondingly, in *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, a discussion of Sternberg's working relationship with Dietrich begins in terms of her 'slavery' and total 'submission' to his will as director. He concludes this chapter: 'I had ended a period of servitude.'

As Pasqual relates the misleading framing narration in *The Devil Is a Woman* to conceal from Romero his own emotional involvement with Concha, an added dimension thereby removes the viewer from the illusion of the story. One must consider not only the story itself, but also the intentions of he who tells it. The stylistic defences and deceptions Sternberg employs, also as storyteller, for concealing his own involvement in the images add a modernist dimen-

sion to his work. A psychological depth extends beyond the surface of the screen to engage the spectator's intellectual participation. He must extricate the significance of a level of meaning beyond that of relating the narrative. Therefore, *The Devil Is a Woman*, which Andrew Sarris has referred to as Sternberg's 'coldest film', is perhaps his most distinctly personal.

The artist seeks and invents his own original modes of self-expression to meet the demands of his imagination. Sternberg's Expressionism was too far ahead of its time for most of his audience and critics. Many of his films were tremendously popular. However, the bewildered reactions to one of his two most thoroughly modernist works, *The Scarlet Empress*, is evidence that popular—and for the most part critical—approval of his films depended on their most superficial entertainment appeal. *The Devil Is a Woman*, withdrawn from distribution shortly after its release and not even seen again commercially until recently, is generally misunderstood and berated ('dull stupidity') by critics and scholars even today. New and unconventional approaches and techniques are to be found in all Sternberg's previous and subsequent surviving films, but *The Scarlet Empress* and *Devil* are relentlessly executed in modernist terms; according to an aesthetic strategy which functions as a direct expression of the artist's consciousness.

It is easy to imagine how anarchic these two films must have seemed at the time of their realisation (as they still are). Sternberg had conceived a most original stylistic strategy to accommodate that inner tension between revealing and concealing his peculiar preoccupations. These films represent the hyperbolic extensions of this strategy—one characterised by ambiguity, dramatic and visual abstraction and dehierarchisation, an indiscriminate mixture of genres, and black and absurdist humour.

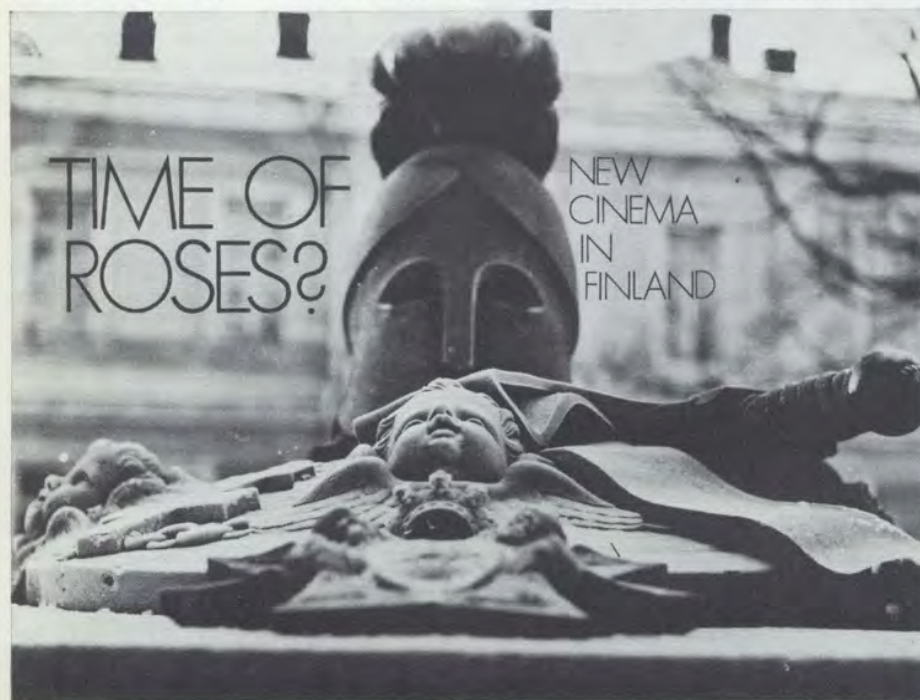
In the essentially 'vamp' formula plot and characterisations of *Anatahan*, Sternberg's last film, may be seen yet another restatement of the same preoccupations. His purported aim is an 'experiment . . . to alert all of us . . . to the necessity of reinvestigating our emotions and the reliability of our controls.' However, his warning in *Anatahan* is relatively free of the diverting stylisation of concealment typical of previous films. Sternberg's 'didactic' intentions are better served in *Anatahan*—a film without the customary elliptical traps, cryptic ambiguities and mysterious charm of the enigmatic. *Anatahan* represents the work of a Sternberg relieved of the heightened tension of having to contend (in his own inimitable and captivating fashion) with his infatuation with Dietrich as a dangerously 'too perfect' medium for the expression of a subjective obsession. The labyrinthine abysses of the often outrageous, always beautiful style in which Sternberg's intellectual discipline demanded he dress his emotional indulgence, most dynamically expressed in the series of films with Dietrich, are more intriguing and exciting. In their extraordinarily direct communication of this quintessential quality of tension, these films best express the sensibility and personality of Josef von Sternberg. There are few subjects more intriguing and exciting than Sternberg himself. ■

Sternberg before Dietrich: 'Exquisite Sinner' (1926)



It is hardly surprising that relatively little is known about the Finnish cinema, since Jörn Donner is the only film-maker whose work has been seen outside Finland on any scale. Donner's article about himself in *SIGHT AND SOUND* ('After Six Films', in the Spring 1970 issue) rather undervalued other Finnish films, to judge from a recent National Film Theatre season which included work by directors like Risto Jarva, Jaakko Pakkasvirta and Mikko Niskanen.

Finland's cinema has existed since 1904, and has been in continuous production since the 1920s; at the industry's height, in the 1940s and 1950s, as many as twenty-five feature films were produced annually, a very high figure for a country of only four and a half million people. Yet in Britain the only reasonably well known Finnish film, until the late 1960s brought Niskanen's *Under Your Skin* and Donner's films (*Black on White*, *Sixty-nine* and *Portraits of Women*), was the veteran Edvin Laine's sympathetic but clumsy *The Unknown Soldier* (1955). Now that we have been introduced to the new Finnish cinema, it is to be hoped that we may have a chance some time to see more of the traditional one—films by Erkki Karu from the silent period, by Teuvo Tulio from the 1940s and Matti Kassila from the 1950s, and probably most important, the films of Nyrki Tapiovaara, a socialist who made five films in the late 1930s before being killed, at the age of 29, in Finland's 'Winter War' with Russia.



'Viapori—Castle of Finland'

Jim Hillier

Finland is not really part of Scandinavia, although it has a large Swedish-speaking minority; it is not quite the rather less developed Sweden one is sometimes led to expect, although there are parallels. Finland is still in the middle of the difficult transition from a mainly agrarian to a mainly urban society; but while many Finns would like their country to go precisely the way of Sweden, many others reject Swedish bourgeois socialism. Poised between East and West, the Soviet Union on one side and Sweden on the other, Finnish society is often polarised. There is a great deal of economic, political and cultural contact with Russia; and, although this may have been forced on the country by geography and the results of the Second World War, for large sections of the population the contact is very genuine. Almost certainly, though, more Finns look to the West than to the East for economic salvation, a social system and a cultural identity. Nevertheless, Finnish society is politically deeply divided.

It offers an initial definition of the new

cinema if one says that very few of the country's problems or divisions were evident in the traditional cinema (which even at its best usually specialised in literary adaptations, rural films and domestic comedies), while the themes of the new cinema give a very good idea of some of the more pressing issues currently under debate: work, housing and urban life in general, class, political and historical divisions, the status of women, alcohol, problems of rural life. Even so, the overtly political-social aspect of the new films represents only one emphasis, though probably the most important one. Donner must be counted among the new cinema men, and so must Niskanen, but neither works from an explicitly political commitment. Donner's work derives more from a Swedish tradition of personal, moral exploration, while Niskanen recognises a debt to an older Finnish tradition (Tapiovaara and Tulio, for example), of which a director such as Jarva admits to knowing almost nothing.

Mainstream Finnish cinema all but died

a few years ago, because of overproduction, competition from television and a prolonged actors' strike. Production fell from twenty-one features in 1962 to only three in 1967. At the same time younger directors like Jarva, Pakkasvirta, Niskanen and Erkki Kivikoski—many of them schooled like Tapiovaara before them in the film club movement—were making their first films. Maunu Kurkvaara had shown the way in the late 1950s by working independently of the big companies, and most of the new film-makers worked in small, independent production groups, helped along by the recently instituted state prizes for quality. The beginning of a recognisably new cinema can be located in 1965 with Jarva's first solo feature *Game of Chance*, followed a year later by Niskanen's *Under Your Skin*, both films concerned with the problems of young people and both owing a good deal to the styles and subjects of the French New Wave.

These films represented a noticeable break from the more weighty and traditional conventions; but as far as political content is concerned a more important date was 1967, which saw Jarva's first really mature film, *A Worker's Diary*. In 1966 a Popular Front government was formed, which for the first time included Communists. This event, which concretised the increasing leftward trend of Finnish life throughout the 1960s, gave added impetus to left wing film-makers who were just beginning to find their feet; they now had a real context in which to work. Jarva himself is very aware both of general influences and of the change in his own work after 1966: 'The subjects and styles of expression of films have been remarkably affected by the powerful social consciousness which began its growth in the 1960s.'

A Worker's Diary is a crucial film, since in both style and content it set the tone for much that followed. The film, which describes the progress of the marriage of Juhani and Ritva, is in four parts: The Wedding (Marriage Across Class Divisions); Juhani (Not by Bread Alone); Ritva (Not by Love Alone); Ritva and Juhani. The fine basic love story is continually crossed and affected by other themes: class differences (Juhani is a worker, Ritva is middle-class) and, stemming from them, political divisions; work (the marriage begins to go wrong when Juhani has to move away to work and cope with new responsibilities); housing, and so on. Jarva insists on the social dimension of the love story, breaking up his narrative by juxtaposing naturalistic sequences with charts and statistics (about housing, for instance) and also imagined sequences (Juhani's father forced to kill a baby whose mother has died, caught between the lines in the Winter War). The fusing of the two strands is very successful: one understands both the private emotions and the social pressures and needs which help to define them. At the end of the film Ritva's alienation is overcome, after a foetus has died in her womb. Attitudes and suspicions from the past can be left behind, and Ritva and Juhani can begin again.

Finnish critics are constantly asking their country's cinema to confront the reality of Finland, to reveal the social, economic and cultural structures in society. Jarva's

effort to answer this call was followed up by many later films. In part, this meant providing a critical alternative to accepted views of Finnish life. Thus *The Green Widow* (1968), the first solo feature by Jarva's colleague Jaakko Pakkasvirta, is set in the Helsinki garden suburb of Tapiola, much vaunted as a social and architectural success. It shows a woman 'widowed' and alienated by suburban life and her confinement to flat and children; but since suburbia is only a consequence of a kind of social thinking which manifests itself in other ways, *The Green Widow* is a critique of society in general. The leading character is shown slowly disintegrating, trying desperately to break out of a destructive routine. Pakkasvirta uses caricature and dream sequences, but his stylisation works. There is, for instance, an extraordinary sequence in which the woman takes her children to a desolate open space and tells them a fairy story which becomes, unconsciously, progressively more violent and grotesque. Pakkasvirta's second feature, *Summer Rebellion* (1969), is even more ambitious, and in its attempt to confront the Finnish situation (the film is subtitled 'In pursuit of Finnish happiness') uses an even greater variety of methods, including fiction and documentary, parody, political texts and much else. Its analysis of consumer society is recognisably Godardian and sometimes confused; but it is, importantly, a brave film, a film which isn't afraid to take risks.

As co-scriptwriter of *Summer Rebellion* and Jarva's later films, the critic Peter von Bagh is very much part of the new cinema; but his own first feature, *The Count* (1971), takes a thoroughly individual approach to the problem of social analysis. The film, a true farce, proved highly controversial, attacked on the one hand for its vulgarity and on the other for not being socially critical. In his story of the amorous adventures of a real-life romantic and sexual con-man who claims to have been engaged seventy-six times, von Bagh pursues a number of objectives. He has a critical interest in the dialectical interplay of fiction and documentary which emerges from having the man play himself. Then, since the 'Count' is an entertainer and 'hero' of the scandal magazines (in a preface he is called 'the dream of every Finnish man'), he is treated as a symptomatically synthetic romantic product of the consciousness industry. The film's enormous shifts of mood, from farce to pathos and from vulgarity to lyricism, are designed both to explode bourgeois ideals and to emphasise the ambiguity of the Count's social role. *The Count* is uneven in achievement, but at the least it reveals in von Bagh an original talent.

Jarva's own subsequent films, *Time of Roses* (1969) and *Rally* (1970), are less successful than *A Worker's Diary* or Pakkasvirta's films. *Time of Roses* is a sort of social science fiction story set in a peaceful and prosperous 2012, but designed to expose subtle bourgeois and meritocratic distortion in its story of a 'conscientious' television producer's efforts to make a 'true programme about an ordinary girl who died in 1976.' *Rally*, which views automobile culture as an image of society as a whole, is a reminder that Jarva has also worked



Above: 'Rally'. Below: Liisamajja Laaksonen in 'Poor Marja!'



Below: Pertti Ylermi Lindgren, Elina Salo in 'The Count'



extensively in documentaries on social subjects. There is a certain academicism about his work, making his status as Professor of Arts seem rather appropriate at times. *Time of Roses* and *Rally* are sometimes a little laboured in exposition, and too lingering in their effects. But Jarva's new film, *When the Heavens Fall* . . . (1972), is a return to form. As usual the film begins from a contemporary problem—the rise and effect of the

scandal press—and fuses personal and social dramas, but the style is much less cool and detached than previously. The approach here is more oblique, with the social point being made through the obsessive love story of a magazine editor and one of his victims.

Not all the films of this new cinema have been commercial successes and most have been controversial, partly because of their social content and partly because of their stylistic innovations. But they did find audiences and they did make an impact. This is partly explained by the political situation in which the film-makers have been working, in particular the existence of a divided but large and genuinely popular Left with strong traditions. Just as Antti Peippo's short film *Viapori—Castle of Finland* (1972) reinterprets along socialist lines the 'official' history of one of Helsinki's biggest tourist attractions, so the youthful KOM-Teatteri produces musical plays which interpret moments in Finnish history from the Communist point of view. This group can find authentic popular audiences with the kind of productions which in Britain would be the preserve of the middle class. The obvious comparison is with the Berliner Ensemble; and indeed the influence of Brecht is very noticeable not just in theatre and in forceful political songs, but in the way parody and factual data as well as song are used extensively in film—for instance, in Jarva's *Rally*.

When Kaj Chydenius (the Nordic Brecht-Weill) was asked about his songs being translated, he replied that he would not mind, but that as a Marxist he could write about and work only for the situation in his own country. It is no paradox that it is this attitude among Finnish Left artists which makes their work of international interest at the same time that it has direct relevance to their national situation. There is little spurious 'internationalism' about this new cinema. As Peter von Bagh has said, 'In order to become truly international, a film must be profoundly national.'

Jörn Donner has said that he finds it more interesting to deal with moral problems 'than even to try to touch on direct social problems that call for a solution'—in contrast to Jarva, who stresses that 'consciousness of social responsibility . . . is a first requirement' for his film-making. Nevertheless, Donner, who made his initial reputation in Sweden, has been an important force in the new Finnish cinema. It was his company, for example, which produced *Under Your Skin*, and most recently *Poor Marja!* (1972) by the radical woman director Eija-Elina Bergholm, whose earlier credits include co-scripting Donner's own *Anna*. *Poor Marja!* examines a woman's struggle to find her place in bourgeois society, and is based on research into the lives of women in three generations (we also see Marja's widowed mother and her grandmother, forced to leave her country house for an old people's home). The film is not quite naturalistic, and its ending is in a sense imposed—a leap of faith.

After destructive affairs with men and uneasy manoeuvrings in office politics, Marja moves away to her provincial home and later to the countryside with her grandmother. This retreat is followed by

self-withdrawal; and by the end, alienated and unconscious of her actions, Marja simply runs away into the night. She is found next morning by a worker outside his hut. He gently takes care of her, asking nothing of her. No more words are spoken, but a song about Marja is sung over the final images of her visit to a workers' café, a montage sequence of very direct, simple images of men, women and children at ease with themselves and others; here is that sense of identity which until now Marja has lacked. As if to emphasise the political divisions in Finland, one critic took the ending to mean that Marja had resorted to prostitution.

Although Donner's latest Finnish film, *Tenderness* (1972), shows him still working in the slightly thin vein of low-key sexual comedy, he has also recently made films with more direct social concern, in particular the team-made documentary *Fuck off! Images from Finland* (1971). 'We wanted to show people, human beings in close-up, and we gradually enlarged the scope of the questioning, from wages and security to politics and power and the isolation in remote villages.' The result is an engaging, often biting reportage on the state of Finland, and it defines Donner's other work to the extent that it is a strange sight indeed to see Donner interviewing Karelian labourers about their struggle to survive.

If the most important characteristic of this new cinema is the way it manages to combine, and make inseparable, the personal and social levels and the attempt to come to terms with the Finnish situation, then Mikko Niskanen's *Eight Deadly Shots* (1972) is one of its finest achievements. Like the other films, it stands in direct relation to Finnish tradition, offering a really 'alternative' vision. The rural film has a long tradition, but rural life is in transition and Niskanen's film offers an acute analysis of this situation; the fine opening, for instance, counterpoints images of decaying rural life with a traditional song about the glories of the Finnish countryside. Originally made for television in a five-hour version, and an almost wholly personal achievement (Niskanen wrote the screenplay and also plays the main part), *Eight Deadly Shots* is a painstaking reconstruction of the events leading up to a famous crime of a few years ago in which a poor tenant farmer shot and killed four policemen, apparently without motivation.



'A Worker's Diary'

Niskanen takes the crime as symptomatic of the enormous social and economic problems of rural life, but manages to create vividly, by superb observation of family and work life, the sense of one man's experience. The preparations for a family outing to a local wedding, for example, are observed with gently amusing detail; then at the wedding Pasi, the farmer, and his wife dance, Pasi slips out, talks with other men, and the subject of drinking comes up. The mood changes from lightness to anger and finally violence. Niskanen does not hurry such sequences, giving them the time they need to build up; in this way simple events become telling moments in the general drama. Carting logs in a snowbound forest, Pasi's old horse gets stuck, and there follows a touching scene in which the horse strains to respond to Pasi's tender coaxing, finally pulling itself free; later, the police come to remove the horse in lieu of Pasi's unpaid taxes (naturally, without the horse Pasi is unable to work), but they get stuck and have to come back and ask his help, which is given with a wry smile. It is from the accumulation of such unstressed moments that the film derives its force. It

has been said that the short version (two and a half hours) makes the film more a portrait of an alcoholic—moonshining is seen as a desperate rebellion against the authorities—than a broad picture of a section of society; but even so it is one of the very few films in which one experiences directly the rhythms of nature and of work. In its realistic detail and slow, even oppressive style, the film has been compared to Zola, but it has moments of tenderness and gentle humour which make its final effect much more than simply bleak.

Finnish cinema has its problems, and not only economic ones. There are many filmmakers who think that overtly political cinema is ruining the industry by alienating audiences. Against this, one must put the commercial success of at least some of the films, and the conviction of those filmmakers who believe that their cinema can and must speak of and to the society in which it is produced, can and must take part in shaping that society. A small industry which can produce films of the stature and social relevance of *A Worker's Diary* and *Eight Deadly Shots* is one of which we shall hear more.

Japanese Notebook

from page 30

in *Tobacco Road*, and ethnographical descriptions. Not surprisingly, it lacks real coherence, with legend, ritual and contemporary allusions uneasily jumbled together. Its almost hypnotic spell is a reflection of Imamura's skill in bringing to life the island and its people, as one startling or eccentric image follows another. (The son who spends twenty years digging a pool in order to undermine a huge rock; the gathering together of the villagers on the sea shore for an act of fish worship.) The real *coup de théâtre* comes in a magnificently shot sequence showing a pair of illicit lovers being pursued across the ocean and murdered

by the outraged peasants, culminating in a glimpse of a shark waiting fathoms below in a steel blue sea.

Kobayashi's most recent production, *Inn of Evil*, returns to his favourite theme of the lone figure transfixed by a crisis of conscience which finally destroys him. In this case, it is difficult fully to believe in the sentimental change of heart experienced by a wicked smuggler (Tatsuya Nakadai in his most pop-eyed mood) and his gang, who try to help a young man rescue his girl from a geisha house. Yet, atmospherically, the film carries many of Kobayashi's characteristic fingerprints, notably in the splendid use of a mist-shrouded riverside inn where the smugglers congregate, with its profusion of wooden walls and use of three clearly

defined levels of action. As in *Rebellion*, Kobayashi reserves his main action until the end: a fantastic ballet of black and white shapes as dozens of policemen carrying lanterns converge on the inn, chase the inmates across dark, menacing swamps, and finally trap them in nets and long, wispy ropes. If only European directors could shoot like this. . .

An Ozu tailpiece. While in London, Mr. Yamada recalled a meeting with Ozu when the latter came back during the war from Singapore, where he had seen many American films. Moodily shaking his head, Ozu muttered, 'After seeing *The Grapes of Wrath*, I knew Japan couldn't win the war.'

Stanley Kubrick's films seem to provoke the kind of mindless praise and attack that is called 'controversy' these days. In the case of *A Clockwork Orange*, the responses have ranged from 'brilliant' to 'boring', with special attention to the film's depictions of violence. If the viewer responds to nothing else, he is sure to notice the sensational subject matter. Of course, violence is a difficult subject for visual treatment. The question must be, does the work provide a context that can safely hold such distracting materials? Kubrick has been careful to offer such a container. But if the viewer refuses it, he is left holding the inevitables—violence, sex, death—at least as far as chatter and film criticism are concerned.

A Clockwork Orange has a number of things to say about violence. It shows the victim's pain. Only the naturalistic details of suffering in *Bonnie and Clyde* are comparable in this respect to Kubrick's work, and Kubrick's is the more daring stylistically. The film also shows the joy of the attack, especially in the balletic gang-fight. But the parody there of bar-room brawls alerts us to the very special point of view even as we enjoy the feral grace. The beating of the tramp is nastiness seen darkly, peripherally. We all know it happens, but what to do? The attack on the HOME is the scene everyone will remember. Like *Bonnie and Clyde's* set-pieces of extempore chaos, part of the power of the scene is the anything-can-happen surprise of the visit. But Kubrick combines the gang's brutal improvisations with Alex's calculated song and dance: realistic detail and stylised action that reinforce one another and indicate the state of

mind that is the subject of the film. Some have found only a technique of estrangement in the stylised violence. I find myself distanced and touched. Somehow the artificiality makes the violence more painful, Alex's coolly committed acts more evil.

Then there are those reviewers who have found Alex the only 'attractive' figure in the film. But surely evil is alluring; and ungenerous, too—an important point when the immediate vision we get is Alex's. Would the death of the rather attractively tart Catlady be the more appalling if it were not the obscene obliteration from Alex's ecstatic consciousness that the film records? Alexander De Large must not only conquer his world. He must unify it, no matter how distorted the final vision. His habit coincides with Kubrick's attempts to give a motion picture a complexity of visual coherence, to create a system of visual correspondences that will illuminate its theme. To complain

of Alex's singular attractiveness is to indicate a naïveté about the role and to compliment Malcolm McDowell's rendering of evil's various charms. Kubrick's future society is 'Alexed' into a child's refuse-strewn playground.

The child keeps meeting fragments of himself in his career of crime; even his costume—white overalls, boots, bowler hat—looks borrowed from the technicians, guards and politicians he encounters. Alex is characterised not only by his actions against society, but in the actions of the State against Alex. The two are equated in the film, his charm reproduced in its duration, the principal difference—a perhaps considerable one—in the State's coarsely institutional and indiscriminately committed immoralities that Alex can only practise on a restricted scale. Those critics who find special pleading for Alex in the State's depredations against him ignore the equation, a real accomplishment in so carefully structured a work. Not only do each of the initial scenes of gang violence return in the retribution sequences at the end; they also set up the chief spheres of conflict throughout. The tramp is Alex's representative of an indifferent society; Billyboy's rival gang a prefiguration of Alex's murderous droogs; and Mr. Alexander, in his very name, an indication of Alex's self-directed destructiveness. Just as Alex forces Mr. Alexander to watch the unspeakable, so Alex will be forced by the State. Both Alexanders are enemies of the State and share a name that means 'defender of men'. When Alex is interrogated by the quartet at the police station, he ironically invokes the law, just like the tramp at the mercy of his four tormentors. The martinet Chief Guard at the prison is Alex the gang-leader, and he inflicts inhumanities on Alex as Alex does on his victims. When Alex comically mimics him at the Medical Institute reception centre, he only punctuates the careful parallels of individual and State which we have seen all along.

The psychological mechanism behind Alex's unifying vision is that of 'projection'. All Alex's victims are outside society—the tramp, the gang, the radical—and when he punishes them, he unknowingly punishes himself. The 'mirror defence' of projection works to throw outward, to spit out, the consciously disowned aspects of the personality by ascribing them to others. The mechanism is itself unconscious. When Alex commits evil, he enjoys the pleasure of the act itself, the knowledge that it is considered wrong by society, and the unconscious justification of the act through projection. Thus, Alex rapes, ensures there is a witness to the rape, and punishes the 'complacency' of the victim. Evil is honoured, sharpened and justified. Alex levels the social ranks of his victims. A ballet of hoods implies a foregone conclusion: masculine power is questioned only to be affirmed. The drunk's rhetorical complaints are Alex's own: he hears just what he wants to hear. Throughout the film, figures of authority (Deltoid, the police, the Chief Guard, the doctors and the Minister of the Interior) are all versions of the gang leader.

As the equation is perfect but in one respect, Alex is conscious of his evil—horribly so—except in his need for self-justification. How reviewers could have

Don Daniels

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

Alex as victim: the attack by the river



missed the comedy of childish egotism is a kind of perfection in itself. The infantile fantasies show Alex's blindness to his own psychology through a masochistic dream in which he always triumphs despite indignity, torture and 'suicide'. Men court him, newspapers celebrate him, Hitler apes him. The lovely bird motif throughout the film—the Beethoven *frissons* in Bar and lair; the malchick screams at the Medical Institute's sinny; the gull over the Thames; and the growing boy eating from the Minister's hands—not only indicates the variety and integration Kubrick achieves through motivic relationships, but Alex's pathetic desire for freedom in the midst of blind dependence. Just an ordinary boy, with a stash, a pet and a love of Beethoven.

Kubrick has appropriated theme, character, narrative and dialogue from Anthony Burgess' novel, but the film is more than a literal translation of a construct of language into dramatic-visual form. Kubrick's film refashions the materials of the novel, and the rigour of the reworking gives the film a poetic compression and resonance that the novel lacks, despite its disturbing narrator, intricate structure and brilliant language. 'Nadsat' figures primarily in only the first third of the movie, but Kubrick has included much of Burgess' narrative invention, and as a result the Alexanders of film and novel conquer similar empires. The unifying parallels between citizen and State and the mechanism of projection are taken from the novel, although Kubrick finds new ways of communicating them visually.

There is a psychological name for the kind of ferocious insanity directed at the fabric of society that Burgess and Kubrick portray. It is 'Alexanderism', *agriothymia ambitiosa*, and it designates the desire to destroy nations. Alex is murderer, rapist, thief, hood—a Bad Bad boy. The film assumes the evil of his acts to be evident. What is condemned specifically is not the act but the mental dynamics that led to it. The shouts of the gang in their frolickings are mechanical, self-advertising, a bit joyless; obviously another kind of pleasure is being had in addition to simple sadism. When Alex moves to Rossini against the rival gang, or his own gang, or the Catlady, he mirrors his State's political conflicts. For the corrupt citizen and State, violent conflict is a necessary instrument of self-creation.

Burgess' novel is a fictional expression of this idea from the psychological writings of Franz Alexander, the neo-Freudian noted for his studies of psychosomatic diseases. Towards the end of his life, Alexander studied the use of motion pictures to create stress in victims of hyperthyroidism (*Psychosomatic Medicine*, XXIII, No. 2, 1961, 104–114). But the generative materials of the novel can be found in the psychologist's earlier work, *The Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality*. The orange is clockwork because of what Franz Alexander would term the 'mechanism of neurosis'. For him, social expressions of violence mirror the conflict within the individual of ego, id and super-ego.

In the healthy personality, the super-ego aids the economy of the psyche with automatic, unconscious repression of the instincts. But in the neurotic, the super-ego

is rigid and schematic in its automatic censorship, like an unbending totalitarian state. This unconscious part of the ego is formed by social laws and parental restraints. When the id threatens to invade the conscious mind with its anti-social desires, the super-ego represses without the ego's awareness of the repression. And in the neurotic, suffering becomes a method of obtaining instinctual release. The super-ego aids the id through over-severity. According to Alexander, 'Clinical experience taught me that the ego makes use of the satisfaction of the need for punishment in order to free itself from the super-ego and surrender itself to the repressed forces.' The corrupt State is 'a macrocosmic repetition of the ego-structure,' for as radical parties war for the sake of conflict, so do id and super-ego. Energy is expended internally rather than expressed. Violence becomes an end in itself. The neurotic drama of id, ego and super-ego is not just a metaphorical one for Alexander; he calls them 'part-personalities' and characterises the super-ego as a 'corrupt official', outwardly severe but privately bribeable. The super-ego conspires with the id and punishes the ego. The neurotic suffers in order to 'pay' for subsequent instinctual release. Punishment rids the ego of the prickings of conscience and adds zest to subsequent expression of instinctual desires.

In novel and film, Alex's career is an allegory of the disguise of instinctual impulse in neurotic symptom, of punishment endured to facilitate crime. By suffering, the ego absolves itself of sin and justifies its commission. Alex has learned the formula well that sees pain as part of pleasurable fulfilment; in fact, a licence to it. With Deltoid and the Minister the arrangement is as clear 'as an azure sky of deepest summer'. Each of Alex's triumphs is preceded or followed by defeat. The 'perfect evening' and the orgy must be paid for by Deltoid's visit and the mutiny of the gang in a series of pleasure-pain, manic-depressive rewards and punishments. Justice demands an eye for an eye. When Alex kills, he goes to prison. The Minister complains that the prisoners 'enjoy their so-called punishment' and counsels Alex on his way to the Medical Facility, 'Let's hope you make the most of it, my boy.'

The self-punishment is signalled in the film by the 'Adagio' from the *William Tell* 'Overture'. The home-coming scene is almost straight from the novel and beautifully played: Alex punishes himself, is punished by his parents (and Joe the Boarder, the Good Good Boy), and punishes Pee and Em in a family circle of guilt. Absolution comes in the near-drowning, nature's purifying rain, and Mr. Alexander's bath. When Alex's groans in the hospital are mixed with those of fornication, we hear Alex's pleasure-in-pain; the exorcism of restraint through punishment allows for masochistic delights as well.

Franz Alexander quotes Schiller's ballad 'The Ring of Polykrates': 'Therefore if thou desirest to ward off suffering, pray to the Invisible Powers that they add pain to happiness.' The universal sense of foreboding in the midst of joy is visualised in the film in the Last Supper that Kubrick has arranged for Alex—an ancient symbolic intimation of the pleasure-pain principle. Alex is the scapegoat (like the three con-

demned men in *Paths of Glory*), the sacrificial lamb, and his story is mythic—that of Osiris, Dionysus, and Christ. Death and suffering lead to absolution and resurrection. In the hospital, 'Eat me' on the fruit basket from Alex's parents is both obscene and sacramental. The film is Alex's masturbatory fantasy. When he listens to Beethoven, four suffering Christs dance. And he commits 'suicide' for his own ends. Alexander quotes Freud (*The Economic Problem in Masochism*): '... even self-destruction cannot take place without libidinal satisfaction.'

For Alexander, the Oedipus complex is 'the nuclear or root complex of all psychoneuroses.' The child must learn to sublimate the love and hate for his parents in tenderness, but there is always some destructive energy left over to be turned against society or against the self. The introversion of the death instinct Alexander sees as 'the primary process in the formation of the neurosis.' Alex provokes hatred in order to justify his anti-social acts and to punish himself. In the compulsion neurosis, Alexander suggests that the father is often identified with the strictness of the super-ego. Alex's parents have not only lost all authority; they have been raped and crippled at HOME. Alex commits symbolic incest (Kubrick carefully does not allow his crime to become matricide in the film) and, indirectly, patricide. With sets and lighting Kubrick has emphasised the rational realm of HOME. The conscious ego is unaware of the secret plans of the instincts. In fact, Kubrick allows Mr. Alexander to prompt his wife to let the forces in. When the 'father' is forced to watch the rape, it is the 'son's' revenge, the sinner watching his sin in all pride, and the id defining its power through the agency of the super-ego.

The Catlady is not so trusting. Her Health Farm is the very *locus* of the super-ego, all instincts honoured in domestication, like her cats and erotic art. Franz Alexander outlines the relationship of the super-ego with the id, both beyond the ken of the ego, but each aware of the other. The super-ego is not fooled by the disguises of desire. In the film, Kubrick has the Catlady call the police, unlike Mr. Alexander, thus allying her with the State and clarifying that the gang merely takes advantage of the call, having offered the attack on the Farm as a bribe to their tyrannical leader. Alex and the Catlady recognise each other immediately. Kubrick turns their fight into a dance in which the unconscious forces of the id (the phallus) battle the conscious personality (the bust of Beethoven). The bust is a symbol of instinct sublimated into the socially useful energy of artistic expression. When the Catlady strikes Alex, the ego is punished because of the id's threat of instinctual release. Having suffered, Alex can then overwhelm the personality and triumph.

Alex's roles are three. In attack he is the id's ever-renewing energies; in command he is the super-ego's ancient despotism; and in pain he is the neurotic ego. In the prison and final HOME sequences, Alex meets the leaders of the State's warring gangs—a new Mr. Alexander and Frederick, the Minister of the Inferior (his name, Kubrick's contribution, means 'peaceful ruler'). The ego is to the super-ego as a citizen of a totalitarian

state is to his government. He is unaware of the government's machinations. And the State is indifferent to him. When Alexander De Large meets Frederick De Large in the prison, still another version of the crime-punishment contract is signed, to be honoured in Alex's conditioning and final rehabilitation. The coda between them in the hospital is another of Kubrick's scenes of duplicity and degraded language. Speech becomes a conspiratorial purr, a litany to console and corrupt, like Dr. Branom's promise, between injections, 'By this time tomorrow, you'll be healthier still,' delivered with that obsessional faith it is Kubrick's gift to record exactly.

Alex and Mr. Alexander, two 'victims', return again at the end of the film. Kubrick has Alex cripple Mr. Alexander, who becomes an enemy of the State and the very personification of the uninhibited instincts. By removing information about Mr. Alexander before the attack, Kubrick makes his politics and his madness seem even more its result. Having suffered, he derives his radical opinions from personal impotence and a liberated desire for revenge. Thus, Mr. Alexander's insanity reveals the same dynamic that is at the root of Alex's hatred of the world and himself. As Franz Alexander suggests, the outwardly directed destructive energies of the unconscious, when turned upon the self, become the super-ego's sadism. Like General Mireau's retaliations for military defeat in *Paths of Glory*, Alex and Mr. Alexander revenge themselves on each other. Kubrick has combined in Mr. Alexander the various roles Alex alternates throughout the film. His Mr. Alexander is the crippled neurotic ego, the government of the super-ego, punishing Alex, and the power of the id, revolting against all order. Like Dr. Strangelove, he beautifully and boldly summarises the madness of the subject. I am thinking of his orgasm of pain and hatred upon recalling his crippler, and the final shot of him madly torturing with the 'Ninth' while surrounded by his co-conspirators.

Kubrick has compared Alex's craft and guile to that of Richard III. But the comparison cannot go very far, for Alex is unconscious of his clockwork. Free will necessitates self-knowledge. Alex is lost in the funhouse mirrors of the narcissist, in the doubles of his victims, in the mirrors of HOME, and in the water imagery throughout the film. There is that magnificent shot of Billyboy the pirate that leads to Alex's marine discipline of his droogs; and later the suicide thoughts by the Thames, the watery bit of corporal, the cleansing rain and bath. The socialist state is a little boy's playpen (Kubrick has made certain the prison doesn't look all *that* uncomfortable).

One of the director's crucial decisions was his very faithfulness to Burgess' narrative structure. The compression inevitably makes the psychological entrapment all the more obvious. In the novel the neurotic formula might possibly be overlooked. On screen, the hyperbolic structure undercuts and exposes the mechanism. The rhetoric is even more heightened than in the novel, but not coarsened. And Alex's litany, 'Clear as an azure sky', never seemed more desperate or ironic.

How ironic too that while Alex's masturbatory dreams are clips from Grade-B horrorshows, the Institute's sinnies look like parodies of 'realistic', Grade-A Hollywood (*Straw Dogs*, for example). While Alex comments on the realism of glorious Technicolor, Dr. Brodsky monitors the death of consciousness. When Walter Carlos' beautiful electronic transcription of the 'Joy' theme's 'Turkish' march variation that accompanies Alex through the Bootick re-enters beneath the 'unstaged' scenes of World War II devastation, the frame of the film widens startlingly. The mirror images multiply from the neurotic, to the gang, to the State, to the paths of glory. Consciousness and freedom lie in ruins.

Alex toasts us, fellow patrons of the Korova Milkbar, at the start of the film. The Vice needs his audience. Kubrick has visualised

the ego's self-dramatising habit with actor-audience scenes throughout. Billyboy's near-rape is enacted on-stage. Alex then arranges a rape for an audience and later becomes an audience for rape. The State dramatises Alex's redemption at the Passing-Out ceremony (the Min of the Int: 'At this stage we introduce the subject himself'). An Ascot audience applauds Alex's fantasy-rape at the end. And the film has as many eyes as 2001, from eyelashes to cuff-links, to Alex's surgically clamped gaze.

Alex is seen as blind to the interdependence of the individual and society. The imagery of theatre and vision reveals that Alex insists on breaking down that unity to step aside for the voyeur's sense of power. The State punishes him for this separation, initiates him, but—if his vision can be trusted—into a corrupt society. In its punishment of the neurotic personality, the super-ego disrupts the unity of the psyche but preserves the integrity of the suffering ego. 'The world is one, life is one,' muses Dr. Brodsky in the novel. In the film, the newspapers champion 'Alex Burgess'. The citizen of a British borough is his own enemy.

The comparison to Richard III may be another Kubrick red herring (although Alex is recognisable in Richard's 'Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass/That I may see my shadow as I pass'). The closer Shakespearian comparison that Burgess and Kubrick surely have in mind is Iago (the brainwashing technique is Ludovico's). Like Iago, Alex is guide, teacher, and 'playwright', even to conditioning. As in *Othello*, his chief victim goes mad for revenge. Alex acts out the violence of Iago's language. Both take pride in their evil. And the HOME rape may well be intended as a version of the Act IV, scene 1 playlet that Iago stages with Cassio and Bianca for a gullible Othello. Othello, after all, projects his fantasies on to Desdemona and luxuriates in self-torture. There is Stephen's description of the 'hornmad Iago' in *Ulysses*, 'ceaselessly willing that the moor in him shall suffer.' Both Alex and Iago are like Genet's Saints of Evil, creating self through crime—and utterly unpunishable. The Anti-Christ is vampire, lost in the bonds of theft.

The ending of novel and film leaves Alex free to choose new or old 'freedoms'. If we get a 'cleaner' Alex in the movie—no *pedophilia*, no 'matricide', no prison murder—it is because his first sin is against himself. The cause of much confusion among his critics has been Kubrick's ability to make us privy to Alex's vision, to show us its seductive beauty while carefully keeping all hands clean. More than a visual investiture of a novelist's or a psychologist's conceits, *A Clockwork Orange* is not a simple film. We watch with no little admiration as Alex demonstrates the coherence he can achieve with a hoodlum artist's exploitation of everything at hand to shape the self. We watch the Alexandrians attempt the formality of dance without ever truly achieving the Dionysian ecstasy that liberates, the 'fantasy' that frees. But the director—who has always been alive to the rhythms of structure—contrasts the locksteps of self-enslavement with the organic beauty of the movements of his film, to suggest something like true freedom from the very heart of fantasy and mechanism.

Alex as final victor: 'the growing boy eating from the Minister's hands'



Film REVIEWS

L'Amour, l'Après-Midi

Scott Fitzgerald once wrote that the test of a first-rate intelligence is 'the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.' Eric Rohmer, a first-rate intelligence if ever there was one, has compiled his moral tales as a dossier of sensibility struggling with the temptation to engage itself with two ideas (or ideals, or dreams, or attachments) at the same time. He always said that the sixth *conte moral* would be the last, and with *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* (the English title, *Love in the Afternoon*, seems an unnecessary lift from the old Hepburn-Wilder picture) we have reached the end. For the last time, in this context at least (Rohmer's next film is apparently likely to have a medieval theme), choice is confirmed by chance.

Just as Chabrol has said that in his films 'a Charles will never kill a Paul', so in Rohmer's universe one knows that the first commitment will always be the final one. His chaste and obstinate heroes (Frédéric here, Jean-Louis in *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*) will take circuitous routes, through their own smugness about themselves and their awareness of the world outside, back to their original attachments. Rohmer's is a cinema not of absolute moralities but of absolute commitments. And, as the *contes moraux* have progressed, so Rohmer has significantly advanced the stage at which the action begins. In *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, Jean-Louis has merely made up his mind to marry the girl he sees across the aisle in church; in *Le Genou de Claire Jérôme* is engaged; in *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* (Gala) Frédéric is very happily married. The temptations and the forces of resistance shift their ground with the context in which they are encountered: this time, possibility confronts the married man's settled reality.

Frédéric (Bernard Verley) is a contented man. His partnership in a small business is flourishing; his wife Hélène (Françoise Verley) has kept on her teaching job, is working on a thesis, and retains a mental independence which satisfies both of them. They have one small child, are about to have another, and have drawn around themselves a neat circle of easy assurance. Frédéric even likes Paris, likes the drama of city crowds, finds only depression in the unfocused and shapeless countryside. He lives among the clear colours of a clear world (Rohmer's décors and Nestor Almendros' camerawork are, as usual, immaculate), at ease with all the city sounds whose buzz and mumble colour the film's soundtrack. His pastime, in the late lunch-hour he likes to take, is window-shopping for clothes and for girls. Since his marriage, Frédéric 'finds all women beautiful'; from the centre of his security, he can explore his defences by looking out at a city of girls—alluring, intriguing, mysterious and, ultimately, unwanted. He daydreams of 'first loves and lasting loves'. In a parade of afternoon dreams, the heroines of previous moral tales advance towards him across the Paris pavements, conquests for the mind.

An interruption arrives in the form of Chloe (Zouzou), a chance visitor from a past perhaps slightly less seemly than Frédéric's well-ordered

present. She is a drifting, insecure stranger, who once apparently drove a friend of Frédéric's to the edge of suicide, has been abroad for several years, and now turns up in his office, looking vaguely for a job—or perhaps in a more real sense for a contact. Chloe is demanding and difficult: she drags him out of the office, flutters the secretaries, makes appointments and fails to keep them. She tantalises the dreamer in Frédéric with her availability and her sudden disappearances (Rohmer is well aware of the Proustian attraction of the lady who vanishes), at the same time that she irritates the businessman. Her job as a waitress keeps her busy when he is free; part of the charm of the precarious relationship is the problem of finding time. They meet in the afternoons—to talk.

The situation only fails to be commonplace—which means that it is never commonplace—because of the finesse of the characterisation, the details of discovery, and the authority of Rohmer's moral barricades. Truffaut, in *Domicile Conjugal*, took the identical situation of a loving young husband, drawn outside his prison of satisfaction by the lure of the slightly dangerous. But Antoine Doinel, the eternal child, was attracted to his Japanese girl by her exoticism, and the relationship foundered when he realised that he had to telephone his wife to find someone to talk to. Rohmer's adults find counter-attractions: it is to Chloe that Frédéric talks, and with his wife that he spends his evenings quietly reading. The untested dream of 'first loves and lasting loves' melts before the cantankerous, difficult, changeable reality of Chloe. His attraction for her lies in his apparent solidity; hers for him in her instability. Both are playing roles—and hesitating over those roles'

'L'Amour, l'Après-Midi': Bernard Verley



implications. Rohmer charts what Frédéric calls their 'faltering friendship' in a fine shading of intricate contour lines.

As in all Rohmer's films, there's a steady connection between a time of day, a place and a state of mind. Apart from his episode in *Paris Vu par...*, the only previous Rohmer feature set in Paris was *Le Signe du Lion*—and that was the Paris of the dog days, summer by the Seine with only the tramps and the tourists left in town. *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* is pitched, from the opening sequence of Frédéric's strap-hanging ride to work, in the setting of offices, office conversations, snatched lunches. Prosaically, the office calendar lets us know how time is progressing—a fortnight or a month during which Chloe has been away, or Hélène has brought the baby home from hospital—while the office remains the place where time changelessly passes. Frédéric's time-table contains an afternoon space into which Chloe can be slipped: it is circumstance as much as character which determines where and how and why they meet. And, typically, it is a chatting, unregarded woman overheard in a restaurant who makes Rohmer's point that it is the setting which counts. For previous Rohmer heroines, the Riviera, Clermont-Ferrand, Annecy; for Chloe, Paris.

In a crowded restaurant, Chloe talks about suicide. Her early nervous swagger conceals vulnerability; but vulnerability is perhaps another layer, disguising a relentless determination to find her own centre. She wants Frédéric first for reassurance, and then (as Isadora Duncan wanted Shaw) as father for a child. Frédéric's retreats from seduction reveal him as another of those Rohmer characters who teeter on the edge of precipices from which they never really intend to jump. Half in and half out of his sweater (throughout the film, sweaters, including the one Chloe buys as a present for the new baby, play a highly significant role), he finally bolts from the ultimate hazard of a naked Chloe. His precipitate flight shows him as at once comical coward and man of principle: the coward runs, and the man of principle runs back, with new illuminations, to his wife and his timeless private life. 'I don't like afternoons,' he says, almost fretfully; Hélène doesn't like them either. The pattern is complete; the illusions of choice and free will once more worked out to a conclusion, in which absolute commitments triumph absolutely.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean

Judge Roy Bean was a 'character', a colourful figure of a kind spawned all over the West in the late nineteenth century. Born in Kentucky sometime in the mid-1820s, he drifted around California and Mexico and served opportunistically with a dubious Confederate guerrilla band in the Civil War, before emerging into verifiable history in the early 1880s as a self-appointed justice of the peace, 'the Law West of the Pecos', in the remote West Texas hamlet of Langtry, where he continued to dispense justice, liquor and sex—most of it pretty rough—until his death in 1902.

He was by all accounts a fairly repulsive character: smelly, ugly, drunken, racist, dishonest, yet charming, eloquent and comic in an expansive frontier fashion. The great passion of his life was the British actress Lily Langtry, the 'Jersey Lily' after whom he named his bar-cum-courthouse, though not—as he claimed—the town in which it was situated. Among other eccentricities he kept a pet bear, which was presented to Miss Langtry when she visited the community in 1903, shortly after Bean's death. The animal bolted and the citizens gave her the judge's revolver as a memento instead. There is little evidence to show that Bean did much actual harm (or much good either)—unlike, say, the psychotic Judge Parker of Arkansas, whose well deserved soubriquet 'The Hanging Judge' has been attached to Bean by the producers of *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* (Cinerama).

Bean himself nearly became a movie hero in his own right when in 1896 a prize-fight between Bob Fitzsimmons and Peter Maher was staged at Langtry. The octogenarian Bean was offered

a future in movies to secure his collaboration in filming it, but unfortunately the primitive equipment recording the fight went wrong, Bean retreated into an alcoholic stupor and a new venue was sought. But Hollywood hasn't done badly by him—there has been a television series based on his life, he's figured in numerous movies, and taken a place near centre stage in William Wyler's *The Westerner* in 1939 (where Walter Brennan's impersonation won an Academy Award) and Budd Boetticher's *A Time for Dying* (1969), when he was played by Victor Jory.

The combination of outrageous cynicism and rampant romanticism in Bean's career has a dual attraction for the film-maker, the draw of myth-making and demythologisation residing in a single self-destructive character. And it's easier to identify what appealed to director John Huston, co-producer and star Paul Newman, and neophyte screenwriter John Milius about this subject, than to explain why the result of their collaboration should turn out to be such a disappointment.

Milius, who wrote *Evel Knievel* and is about to direct his own biography of Dillinger, is clearly enamoured of bizarre Americana for its own sake. John Huston has always been attracted by colourful outsiders, laughing opponents of the system, and has become increasingly disenchanted with the American scene. *The Misfits* and, mostly recently, his astonishing return to early form, *Fat City*, are devastating realisations of his vision of present-day America's spiritual emptiness, false hopes and illusive promises. Apart from making an aggressive statement about modern American life, Newman, one assumes, saw in the role of Bean another version of that sad, innocent, simple-minded, honest loser on whom he has been ringing decreasingly rewarding variations

from *The Left-Handed Gun* through *Butch Cassidy* to the unspeakable *Pocket Money*.

An early title informs us that 'Maybe this isn't the way it was—but it's the way it should have been.' This disarmingly folksy statement prepares us for the way in which the events of Bean's life are reorganised, rather than radically changed, to forge an allegory about the corruption of American life by capitalism and gentility. Bean stands for the rough virtues of the frontier—a boozy, free-wheeling, poker-playing world of personal justice, male supremacy, community spirit, romantic dreaming. His opponent, and inexorable conqueror, is entrepreneur Frank Gass (Roddy McDowall), a prissy lawyer who organises the married women (all inevitably ex-whores) as a purity league and takes over first the local government and later, with the coming of an oil-boom, a burgeoning Twentieth Century City. Bean departs from the town around 1900 and comes back as a sprightly nonagenarian in 1920 to lead his former deputies and his daughter (now running the old saloon) in an orgy of destruction that returns this fascist, corporate Gomorrah to the dust from which it came.

The resemblance to the Brecht-Weill opera *Rise and Fall of the Town of Mahagonny* is striking—in outlook and outline that is, rather than in tone and treatment. And one recalls Brecht's description of that work: 'An attempt at an Epic Opera: an account of mores.' *Roy Bean* is clearly an attempt at an Epic Western and an account of American mores. It even uses some watered-down Brechtian effects, such as characters addressing themselves directly to the audience, short, sharp, exemplary scenes that make a single point, larger-than-life epic figures who represent social forces and attitudes. One could easily envisage it working on the stage as a sort of folk opera or as a play like that most Brechtian of American treatments of the West, Arthur Kopits' *Indians* (the Broadway production of which featured Stacy Keach, who briefly appears here along with numerous other 'guest stars').

John Huston has described *Roy Bean* as 'a romp—a lark'—though presumably a rather expensive one in which he intended to beat the devil out of Nixon's America. Regrettably it falls between two stools, failing on the one hand to be a taut, tight, serious fable, and lacking, on the other, a lightness, a gracefulness of touch that might have matched the better sequences of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. *Butch Cassidy* began with the title 'Most of what follows is true' and proceeded to exploit, or place itself at the mercy of, that truth. The more ambitious *Roy Bean* wallows in mixed intentions and is at its worst when most openly aping *Cassidy*. There are, for example, numerous montage sequences of sepia-tone stills and, most distressingly, a lyrical sequence in which Paul Newman's self-consciously ingratiating Bean, his simple Mexican mistress and a lovable bear romp around in the woods to Andy Williams singing a sickly number only too appropriately called 'Marmalade, Molasses and Honey', which is virtually a reprise of *Butch Cassidy's* equally contrived and anachronistic 'Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head'.

Sentimentality is piled on sententiousness, unfeeling cruelty on smug self-righteousness, until the jerry-built mythical edifice collapses like a miscalculated soufflé. The film eventually becomes a victim of both its internal contradictions and its external targets. More than anything else *Roy Bean* suggests a co-production of Walt Disney Studios and Hugh Hefner. And one recalls Peter Schrag's comment in his perceptive, if muddled, book *The Decline of the WASP*:

'Plastic holds much of Middle America together; old WASP virtues are replaced by synthetics, and the plastic WASP replaces the square.

'The two great puritan entrepreneurs of

Paul Newman as Judge Roy Bean



culture in the twentieth century, Walt Disney of Disneyland and Hugh H. Hefner of *Playboy*, illustrate the transformation . . .

If Disney's attempts to employ technology to create a Middle American utopia resulted in a plastic universe of dancing dolls, animated mermaids, shrivelled heroes and, finally, an enervated and dehumanised world where technology was the only god, Hefner's parallel efforts to produce an anti-puritanical freedom spewed forth a cornucopia of kitsch which was considerably less horrible only because it so often parodied itself. If you pass through the secret door in Disneyland you will in short order be among the Playboy bunnies. . . . What Disney did with sentimentality Hefner accomplished by inversion.'

In this light, *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* is not just a sad waste of talent but an instructive exercise.

PHILIP FRENCH

The Candidate

One of the more irresistible remarks in *Millhouse* was Mr. Nixon's quoted comment (from the 1968 campaign) that if duty didn't call he'd really rather be somewhere like Oxford, writing 'two or three books a year'. Only the unconquerably naive would believe that Nixon's heart is in the Woodstock Road rather than the White House. But it was a somewhat over-enthusiastic effort by the arch-professional ('two or three books . . .') at recognising the present atmosphere of almost total mistrust for the political machine, and the preference for the politician who affects to be only partly absorbed in the business that wholly engages him. *The Candidate* (Columbia-Warner), Michael Ritchie's adroit piece of campaign journalism for 1972, springs from this climate. It's about the manufacture of a politician, a process seen as somewhat analogous to the conversion of curds and whey into processed cheese; and it assumes that the moviegoing electorate will take the corrupting and deadening weight of the political machine as a fact of life, so that the film can dodge the morality of the debate and more cynically annotate the detail.

The film's protagonist, Bill McKay, is plucked from his obscure, idealistic law practice and persuaded to stand as Democratic candidate for the Senate. His campaign manager, Marvin Lucas (Peter Boyle), baits the hook shrewdly: McKay can't possibly win, but he will have a year to say exactly what he pleases to the Californian voters, thereby ensuring publicity for his chosen causes. From there, the manufacturing processes close in: the tailoring and muffling of speeches, the packaging of the candidate for the media, the unsought alliances and the pulling of punches. McKay's father (Melvyn Douglas), a one-time State Governor and a shameless old warhorse of a machine politician, is wheeled out to endorse the campaign—and joins in with alacrity when he realises that his son is learning the politician's dissembling art. A bemused McKay is steered towards a possibility of victory; does indeed win the election; and is finally seen, a lost leader, asking his campaign manager, 'What do we do now?'

In Wilsonian style, *The Candidate* leaves most of its options open. McKay can be seen (too simply, perhaps) as the basically good guy who sells out; or as the not quite so good guy who learns the score and manages to retain some core of essential independence. His speeches may have become a meaningless jabber of edited phrases, but perhaps he still knows what he really wanted to say. Or does he? Perhaps he is a malleable tool because there isn't much sharp edge there to be blunted—only a vague radical goodwill, and some concern about safely fashionable areas like pollution. Even at the end one can take one's choice about why the film breaks with the American tradition of good



'The Candidate': Melvyn Douglas, Robert Redford

liberal losers (Stevenson, McCarthy) and allows him to win. Is it merely for the sake of that cynical last glance? Or because the filmmakers believe that a McKay-style campaign, all soft edges and radical chic, would swing the vote against a seasoned, hard-line Republican opponent? The evidence would seem to suggest otherwise.

Michael Ritchie has been involved in campaign filming; Jeremy Lerner, the scriptwriter, was a speech-writer for Eugene McCarthy. As they pursue their own screen candidate around, you sense a pleasurable satisfaction in uncovering a little of how it's done—liberal guilts about the humbug of the sales technique mixed with convinced professionalism about the results. The television commercials for McKay are not satire: they don't need to be, and Allen Garfield's performance as the campaign's media man looks to be well studied from one or more living models. At the start of his campaign, McKay is an innocent amateur, bumbling about the streets trying to shake hands with strangers and making dull speeches to empty halls. Television creates the image of the bland, concerned young candidate; and although in a general sense the film may find this deplorable, in a more specific way it is happy to watch the mechanism at work.

There's a beautiful scene in which McKay is hauled out to the scene of a big fire, to be gauchely and ineffectually on the spot for the cameras; and is upstaged by his Republican opponent, who drops in by helicopter to announce that something may actually be done about the fires. Both men are playing for the cameras, but the sitting Senator has the authoritative lines. Ritchie and Lerner's film doesn't entirely shirk the futility of mere good intentions without a practical power basis; though as on other points, *The Candidate* plays these cards very close to its chest.

This begins to look like a Ritchie method. As in *Downhill Racer*, his new film prefers its drama to be read between the lines, through allusion and inference (the sidelong reference, for instance, to the girl whom the corruptible McKay has found to relax with on the campaign trail) rather than direct confrontation. Much of the film's attention goes into building atmospheric pressures: the constant accessibility of the candidate, the fatigue blurring the public face, the absurd snatched seconds for

private conversation in washrooms and hotel lifts, the forced surrender to adulators and cranks and the merely resentful man in the street. The political battle is fought not in the traditional smoke-filled rooms but under the TV lights. And Ritchie reconstructs the off-centre, hard-pressed style of journalistic filming, so that there is no visible jar when the real Senator McGovern or Hubert Humphrey passes in front of the camera.

In all this, *The Candidate* is styled to give the feeling of an inside job—sophisticated about politics as it is about movies, allowing the audience to glance at the machinery without really letting them near the engine-room. Robert Redford's performance is Kennedy-styled without being sycophantic or imitative: the actor suggests a hard, stubborn centre of resilience, giving the part a positive impetus which isn't always covered by the script. And in the long run, the film, after the manner of its own campaign commercials, backs away behind the performance, allowing charisma to substitute for lucid analysis. For *The Candidate*, too, is caught up in the media game; and content to play it coolly and rather lazily from its own safe seat on the fence.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Even Dwarfs Started Small

Jean Cocteau said often that he valued highest those films that were documentaries of unreal events; Werner Herzog's second feature *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (The Other Cinema) extends the principle to its logical conclusion by presenting itself from the start as a case history. Lights come up on prisoner No. 1300761 perched on a stool, awaiting interrogation. The credits are printed over slow pans across a flat, desolate landscape, establishing the locale for the action. A hen is glimpsed scratching and pecking at another's corpse. We are shown a still photograph of an unimposing cluster of buildings, each helpfully identified by a caption. Then back to 1300761, a male named Hombre who has at last managed to get the card bearing his number the right way up, now posing for photos for the files.

The interrogation begins, and Herzog moves into the flashback that occupies the remainder

of the film—a meticulous stage by stage analysis of a tiny revolution, when the inmates of a remote institution break free during the director's absence. The deputy director barricades himself in the office with Pepe, the ringleader, as hostage; meanwhile the inmates' aimlessly destructive violence gradually escalates, fatally dissipating their energies in malicious games rather than concerted action. Their behaviour nonetheless drives the deputy to insanity. As the others scatter, Hombre is left roaring with laughter till he chokes, watching a camel that apparently cannot get up off its knees.

In that they at least do something, Herzog's feeble revolutionaries are perhaps one rung up from the lethargic cripples of *L'Age d'Or*, who could barely stir from the filth they squatted in, let alone fight a cause. But their action is limited to rudimentary reprisals (destruction of the director's favourite palm tree, wrecking the institution van), and Herzog carefully emphasises that their awareness of their grievances is as numb-skulled as their retaliatory tactics (they complain of getting powdered milk, of being given gardening as work). This bunch are low on redeeming social merit. They are mean, petty, vulgar, selfish and destructive, just like Buñuel's recurrent beggars; men and women as confused and undirected as most of the world, trapped in the thought if not the manners of the society that has rejected them as criminals and deviants.

These inmates get as far as impeccably laying a table for dinner before realising that this is yet another social ritual they don't need to act out, and they don't think twice about giving directions to a *haute bourgeoisie* in her limousine on a nearby road. But Herzog isn't interested in passing moral judgments on them, any more than he's interested in making patronising 'statements' on man's capacity for inhumanity (in the manner of, say, *Lord of the Flies*, to which the film has shamefully been compared). Rather, to emphasise the sheer pettiness of these prisoners and their revolt, he has hit on the shatteringly direct notion of casting all the roles as dwarfs.

Now, clearly Herzog is no reactionary, and neither does he expect his audience to spend ninety-odd frustrating minutes contemplating how small man can be when the time and circumstances are right for so much more. *Even Dwarfs Started Small* has several positive functions. First, exorcism. Herzog himself speaks of the film as the realisation of a dream, and its prime impact is certainly as an expressionist vision of a *ne plus ultra* of internecine squabbling within the left. Second, strategy. Herzog uses the 'case history' format in order to document as accurately as possible just how and why this attempt at revolution is crippled from within; the film is a catalogue of potential threats to successful revolution. Third, humour. Much of the film is grotesquely funny, whether it's the deputy director pleading liberal motives in an effort to justify himself, or Hombre wilfully failing to climb on to a large bed to avoid having to perform coitus for the entertainment of the others. Herzog recognises that laughter is the only sane response in the face of such incompetence on both sides. Fourth, revolutionary potential. There are lots of throw-away suggestions that the dwarfs are especially favourably placed for real revolution; like Tod Browning's *Freaks*, they have a quasi-mystical communion with each other which implies that, given thought and direction, they could operate as a great team.

For a man with a keen eye for paradise (as his subsequent *Fata Morgana* makes plain), Herzog is prepared to expend a good deal of energy on sorting out man's present ills. *Dwarfs* is staged and shot with diagrammatic clarity, and if his flow of images doesn't quite coalesce into a visual syntax, then at least he has arrived at an admirable balance of content, form and implication in individual shots. He confines his music

track to two pieces, one a raucous gypsy-style song which seems to express the dwarfs' anarchic drive, and the other a chorale (it sounds like a primitive mass) that equally relates to the moments when the dwarfs do unite and play together. But for all the inner coherence of his film, Herzog's strength is his avoidance of dogma, prejudice and all the spurious liberal qualities like compassion. Like Buñuel alone, he is prepared to see man as man, however small.

TONY RAYNS

Duel

With almost insolent ease, *Duel* (Paramount) displays the philosopher's stone which the Existentialists sought so persistently and often so portentously: the perfect *acte gratuit*, complete, unaccountable and self-sufficient. Steven Spielberg, a television director making his first feature, sets the scene brilliantly from the outset with a subjective sequence showing a dark, constricting garage receding into the background as a commercial traveller (Dennis Weaver) starts out on his day's work, nosing slowly through busy city streets until he at last reaches the open highway.

The sense of liberation is precise, and the frustration almost tangible when the way ahead is suddenly blocked by a huge petrol lorry belching clouds of smoke and fumes. Muttering mild imprecations about pollution, the salesman airily overtakes and sits back to relax, only to find the lorry roaring ahead again. The manoeuvre is repeated, and this time he understands that the gauntlet is down. What he does not realise, as he cheerfully accepts the gage, is that the challenger means this to be a duel to the death.

The glory of Richard Matheson's script is that there are no motivations, no explanations, simply the archetypal rivalry of the road carried to *reductio ad absurdum* heights. At first there are moments of unease—the commercial traveller's name, after all, is Mann—in the telephone call to his wife which suggests a background of marital stress, in the rather coy insistence (shots of disembodied feet lurking under the lorry, of an arm visible at the window) with which his efforts to put a face to his rival are frustrated. But all these hints of allegory

(man's inability to cope with machine-age pressures) are held firmly in check, giving just a touch of abstract meaning to the unseen lorry-driver, just a touch of social fallibility to the ineffectual salesman, and leaving the way free for a simple mortal combat between hunter and hunted in which one can, if one likes, see the huge, lumbering lorry as the dragon, and the glitteringly fragile Plymouth sedan as the prancing, pitifully vulnerable knight in armour.

Adhering strictly to these limits and only once leaving the road (a shot of the wife answering the telephone), Spielberg and Matheson screw the tension almost to breaking point with a series of cunningly contrived incidents which simultaneously reveal the full extent of the lorry-driver's murderous intent and turn the timid salesman into an animal fighting desperately for his life. The gradual, teasing revelation by the lorry that it is playing cat-and-mouse, secure in its ability to out-drive, out-maneuvre and even out-race its prey at every turn; the hallucinating moment at the roadside café when Mann still believes reason can prevail and tries to identify his adversary among the drivers eating peacefully at the counter; the petrol station where he tries to telephone the police and the furious lorry simply charges the phone booth, flattening it and opening a Pandora's box of terrors as it scatters a collection of lizards, tarantulas and rattlesnakes kept as caged pets by the owner. Like Clouzot's *Wages of Fear*, *Duel* may be a once-only film, an exercise in tension which never seems quite so rewarding the second time round; but like *Wages of Fear* and unlike *Les Diaboliques*, it is a film built on legitimate suspense rather than sham trickery.

TOM MILNE

Images

Conceivably, schizophrenia is a malady to which all Robert Altman's major characters have been prone. Their behaviour is of little interest analysed on the level of clues or symptoms, but compelling where it gives evidence of large and dangerous attempts to comprehend an irrational world through personal experience, of minds which escape from the trap of an insane situation by going promptly, appropriately, healthily insane. Broad Laingian concepts of madness as

'Even Dwarfs Started Small'



socially conditioned, as a valid experience of a given situation, are as closely worked out in Altman's tragi-comedies as in the explicit psychiatric challenge of *Family Life*. And perhaps just as such a theory opposes the psychiatric treatment of schizophrenia as a personal, functional disorder, so Altman has always opted for revealing his characters through complex situations rather than psychological puzzles. A precise and restless talent for experiment is evident in his switching through original combinations of comedy and drama, creating each time a complete universe, dense in detail and mood yet transparent to the passage of his characters from some rearguard delusion to eventual resignation and absorption. Self-destruction seems the inevitable conclusion, with the single exception of *M*A*S*H*, where a best possible adjustment is made through more vigorous comedy.

Confronting an absurd situation, Altman's heroes plainly have a right to their schizoid view of the world; while their heroism exists in contrast to those skittering creatures on the periphery—the miners in *McCabe*, the army types in *M*A*S*H*—more comically deluded in what they take to be a comfortable adjustment to a basically reasonable world. For *Images* (Hemdale) the population has been substantially reduced—to a vividly fragmenting personality, Cathryn (Susannah York), her compulsive husband Hugh (Rene Auberjonois), and the small cast of characters, both real and imaginary, who mediate their frighteningly exclusive attitudes and behaviour. Altman has insisted that his intention was not a clinical description of insanity but a reproduction of the world from Cathryn's point of view. And quite rightly—in keeping with Laing's dictum that it is possible to experience another's behaviour but not his experience—Hugh is insensitive to his wife's fantasies to a degree which reduces him to the comic grotesques of the earlier films and removes him to some remotely unfeeling corner of Cathryn's stage.

In his own irascible idiosyncrasies, Hugh might be traced back to *Brewster McCloud* and the blue-eyed, streamlined super-cop from the West Coast who emerges from a car wreck with his cool badly ruffled and one eye now mysteriously revealed to be brown, and promptly shoots himself. Hugh is identified by his repertoire of inane jokes and by a collection of accessories—cigar, camera, fold-away spectacles—which suggest an object fetishism as odd as the cop's loving care of his cashmere sweaters. He seems prey to an exasperating neuroticism more pitiable than his wife's hallucinations.

The film begins with Cathryn alone in the vast apartment which Altman takes pains to situate in some unidentifiable urban limbo, just as the breathtaking pastoral scene to which Cathryn and Hugh eventually retreat is only ever referred through the fairytale geography of the children's story which Cathryn is writing. She is deep in the toils of creation as the credits appear over a series of images which make baffling play with the clutter in the apartment, over what might be real in this litter of fairytale icons (a dusky bound volume, a goblet, a candlestick), and what simply suggestive of darker, less decorative interior landscapes. Such ambiguities become altogether more solid when the couple have moved to their home at Green Cove, where the interior offers disconcerting vistas of massive grey stonework, the overall black and white tones of the modern decor, and the unfinished woodwork of the kitchen furnishings. Such detailing—emphasised by the clarity and controlled colour of Vilmos Zsigmond's photography and Altman's occasional framing of Cathryn in distantly preoccupied corners—transforms the house into another metaphor for her imaginatively chaotic experience. A similar effect is over-applied in the soundtrack readings of her composition (actually taken from Susannah York's own children's story *In*



'Duel': Dennis Weaver

Search of Unicorns), which are effective in their initial hesitations and false beginnings, but later tie the real setting too closely to the fairytale terms of the story.

An undeniable sense of frustration also infects the development of the film, which is eventually too direct in its communication and too abstract in its moods, insulating the spectator, as much as the other characters, from Cathryn and her predicament. *Images* as a subject has been with Altman since 1968, pre-dating *That Cold Day in the Park*, and since then has inevitably undergone many mutations, the most radical being in the pre-production period when the director overhauled the script in collaboration with his cast. But beneath all the extemporising, *Images* still requires melodrama on the order of *That Cold Day* to set the story off and keep it going—noticeably in the build-up of simple suspense during the opening scene, where Cathryn is persecuted over the telephone by a mysterious voice which she does not recognise as her own, and collapses in hysteria when the

vision of a dead lover suddenly takes the place of her solicitous husband. Altman has grafted on to this his generalised conception of time and place, explicit points about Cathryn's present sexual frustration and past fears, and incorporated a materialised *alter ego* and other imaginary presences into a dramatic chamber piece. The result is a film which works in conventionally tight, psychological situations, rather than opening out into the landscape of the mind which the subject promises, and which *McCabe* and *Mrs. Miller* came closer to achieving.

More successful in pinpointing Cathryn's struggle with her own imaginative realms and the constricting vision of others is a network of detail in the script. Altman adjusted many of the original American idioms when he had decided on an English actress for the heroine, and an occasional tussle over words between Cathryn and Hugh has actually been worked into the dialogue. More substantial is the role of baleful intermediary between husband and wife taken

'Images': Cathryn Harrison, Susannah York





'Jeremiah Johnson': Josh Albee, Robert Redford, Stefan Gierasch

by Hugh's camera, with Cathryn disgustedly rejecting its denatured reproduction of the world, while Hugh seems bound by just such a view of his wife, exploding in rage when his equipment is broken ('You shot my camera!'), then being mollified as they are briefly reconciled ('I'll tell you a secret. I was getting bored with that camera anyway'), only to be found a little later busily fixing his toy.

RICHARD COMBS

Bad Company

'We'll live off the land,' is the proud boast of Jake and his band of amateur brigands as they set off West in flight from conscription in the Union army; and their comically doomed attempt to live a life of roving independence, disdaining the comforts and the laws of organised society, provides the first of numerous points of comparison between *Bad Company* (Paramount) and Robert Benton and David Newman's best known work, the screenplay for *Bonnie and Clyde*. Late in that film, Clyde Barrow is asked by a solicitous friend where the gang is heading for, and gives the wryly succinct reply, 'We ain't headin' nowhere, we're just runnin' from.' Likewise all that Drew, Jake and their robber band have in common is that they are refugees from civilisation. Once they have determined to turn their backs on society, all their actions lead logically to the moment encapsulated in the film's last shot, Drew and Jake 'frozen' as they draw their guns in nervous unison for their first bank raid.

What made *Bonnie and Clyde* distinctive as a 'gangster' film was partly its preference for rural over city settings, partly its sense of a wildly accelerating but ultimately directionless momentum. In rejecting society, the outlaw is reduced either to 'living off the land', surviving as best he can outside the towns and cities, or to becoming an enemy of that society, in which role he will become as busy 'running from' as 'heading for'. *Bad Company* has the same briskly picaresque quality as *Bonnie and Clyde*, presenting its story in a swift, elliptical, comic-strip structure and quickening the audience's pulse with sporadic bursts of country and Western music. At the same time, the dramatic impact of so much movement with so little clear direction is essentially unsatisfying, and if *Bad Company* finally comes a poor second to *Bonnie and Clyde*, it is because as director Robert

Benton has failed to impose his own moral and aesthetic direction on the story. Where Penn gave shape to *Bonnie and Clyde*'s episodic story by constant visual intimations of its tragic outcome (the cloud crossing the cornfield, the cheerless family reunion), *Bad Company* offers merely the episodic story, with some routine seasonal symbolism (summer giving way scene by scene to winter) to provide a perfunctory tragic overlay.

It's a pity, because the film's opening scenes present a masterly lesson in economic story-telling. In no time, we have seen Drew narrowly escape capture by the recruiting Unionist troops; dispatched from his Ohio home with his parents' blessing to seek his fortune in the West; meet Jake and his down-at-heel associates; set off with them for the prosperous West. All this to the accompaniment of voice-over extracts from Drew's inimitably solemn diary: 'I have taken a promise to keep to the straight and narrow so long as I live. It is still a sunny day.' Equally impressive in these early scenes is the film's period sense, Gordon Willis' Technicolor photography imbuing every shot with the grainy texture and exaggerated chiaroscuro of a 19th-century photograph, while Benton and Newman's dialogue is a hilarious Twain-like blend of genteel, educated Southern (Drew's speech and diary extracts) and coarse vernacular (Jake and his cronies).

Once the gang are out in the wilds, however, the film begins unmistakably to fall apart, becoming at times little more than an engaging series of vignettes as the group struggle to make ends meet in terms of money (an attempt to hold up a stage fails when the gang's decoy, instead of halting the coach, coolly climbs in and drives off), food (Jake skins and cleans their first rabbit with mounting and comical distaste), and even sex. When the gang meet a married couple who are driving disconsolately home after an abortive pilgrimage to the golden West, Jake agrees to the husband's offer to hire out his wife to one and all for a bargain ten dollars. Here, as elsewhere, Drew stands aloof, informing Jake defensively that he is 'keeping himself' for his wedding night, and entering demurely in his diary: 'I begin to feel I should find some poor creature to toil with me through life's weary way.'

The thread that almost holds the film together is furnished by the subtly contrasting portraits of Drew and Jake. In the interests of preserving his rigid Methodist integrity, Drew employs every devious ruse—furtively extracting from his own wallet the money he proudly claims to have stolen from a hardware store—to

persuade the gang that he is as accomplished and experienced a crook as they. Jake meanwhile makes no bones about his trade, and is quite happy, once discovering that Drew has double-crossed him, to relieve his friend of the too dollars jealously concealed in his boot. As the two confront each other while Jake waits to be hanged, their roles are at last laconically defined when Jake declares, 'You're the liar, I'm the crook.' But the film's last shot dramatically throws out any nice distinction between one form of dishonest dealing and another. Like the heroes of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*—a film whose style prefigures that of *Bad Company* in its unnerving fluctuations between authenticity and pictorial chic—Drew and Jake are finally 'frozen' in a last, decisive anti-social gesture. Unlike Bonnie and Clyde, however, they seem the heroes of a disappointingly inconclusive epic.

NIGEL ANDREWS

Jeremiah Johnson

Stepping off a barge on the last stage of his journey out of civilisation into the Rocky Mountains, Jeremiah Johnson is introduced as a man of 'proper wit and adventurous spirit... suited to the mountains,' as though this dour green-horn were already plainly on his way into legend. Before the credits have appeared, in fact, Sydney Pollack seems to have set about the kind of mock-epic storytelling by which he has made room within his films for romantic adventure, deep seams of comedy, settings as handsome as nature can provide, and a gallery of characters who have elected to become heroes in their own epic simply by being foolishly human to a delirious degree.

In this determinedly spectacular display of human features, Pollack bears some similarity to Franklin Schaffner, the contemporary who also moved from television into films surprisingly generous in their sense of staging and skilful drawing of plot into poetic drama. But the grand manner in Schaffner looks like wholehearted romanticism, while Pollack often seems to be over-calculating and undercutting his own broad romantic flourishes. He works not so much by sacrificing plot for character as by subjecting both to an intellectualised view of human contradictions. In connection with *Castle Keep*, Pollack has spoken of the warmonger Falconer and the art-lover Beckman as being facets of the same personality; and when he moves away from comedy such a deliberate devising of human qualities results in the portentous allegory of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*.

Jeremiah Johnson (Columbia-Warner) conceivably tells of another battle in man's struggle

'Bad Company': Jeff Bridges



with his own nature. But the conflict is so obliquely introduced that for a while what is most striking about the film is its apparent disconnectedness—a rambling series of incidents and encounters in which Johnson, the tyro mountain man, makes the acquaintance of his bizarre and more experienced brethren and by accident acquires his own incongruous family, when he takes the young survivor of an Indian massacre away from a mother keeping an insane vigil over the graves of her other children, and is later bamboozled by the intricacies of Indian courtesy into taking a squaw for a bride.

Johnson's painful education in the ways of the wild is something like the processes of re-education in *The Scalphunters*; though with its conflicts of lore and learning and quality of serio-comic debate, the latter film had a lively tension which *Jeremiah Johnson* replaces with a loosely strung account of how a fumbling greenhorn is transformed into an awe-inspiring myth. The humour of such episodes of cultural shock as the arrival at the camp of missionary-trained Indians who now have their own crucifix totem and offer their hospitality in French, makes up an amiably picaresque tale. But it is only belatedly that a fruitful antagonism develops, not this time between opposing halves of a multi-faceted personality but between Johnson and the mountainscapes where he struggles to survive.

The concept of Jeremiah Johnson, in fact, could not be further from the mountain man of Vardis Fisher's novel. The triumphant giant whose sense of communion with the wilderness is peculiarly expressed in spontaneous expressions of joy (and a formal education in classical music) disappears in Robert Redford's disgruntled refugee from civilisation. And what the mountains offer is not so much a sanctuary from the man-made world (far from exulting in nature, the mountain men appear preoccupied with the trials of their condition), as simply another arena in which they struggle to adapt their own natures. The opening, incongruous description of Johnson as 'suited to the mountains' becomes ironically true by the end when, after declaring war on the entire Crow nation for the murder of his wife and adopted child, Johnson becomes, for redmen and whitemen alike, a mysterious manifestation of the towering and remotely foreboding landscape. His assimilation is anticipated in a scene near the beginning when, as a hapless novice, Johnson comes upon the corpse of an old mountain man, frozen into a bizarre outcropping amidst the rocks and with a tattered parchment stuck to his chest bequeathing his good buffalo gun to his lucky finder. The details have a certain reverberation through the film; but their development is frustrated by the casually episodic quality of the whole, and some unnecessarily wide-open expanses within the story.

RICHARD COMBS

The Amazing Mr. Blunden

As if to prove that *The Railway Children* was no flash in the pan, Lionel Jeffries has adapted and directed another novel for children. *The Amazing Mr. Blunden* (Hemdale) bears several similarities to E. Nesbit's story. A fatherless family in straitened circumstances, befriended by an elderly gentleman, is suddenly translated to a house in a country village. But this time there is something strange about the benevolent gentleman, Mr. Blunden (Laurence Naismith). He is a ghost, and the house in the country is a broken-down mansion, reputed to be haunted. The young brother and sister, James and Lucy, soon discover the source of the haunting to be two children who had lived in the mansion a hundred years earlier and died in a terrible fire. The ghost children beg the help of the newcomers, who agree to travel back in time with

the aid of a useful potion and try to help change the course of the tragedy.

The opening sequences—London streets at Christmas, the family in a squalid flat, Mr. Blunden appearing like a good fairy out of the snow—is pleasantly Dickensian. The time is 1918, and the period is established with that flair for precise detail which is a feature of Jeffries' style. His serious, non-condescending approach draws marvellously matter-of-fact performances from all four children, but he can hardly claim credit for the work of a baby who effortlessly steals every scene he appears in.

Jeffries' laconic method assumes acceptance of the supernatural with an agreeable common sense which stays on the safe side of smugness, and his ghosts are splendidly solid. Unfortunately, this down to earth attitude is not quite consistently followed. While the ghost children are in a sense as true to life as their living friends, their wicked uncle and his confederates are caricatures from a nightmare. This is obviously a deliberate effect, perhaps intended to offset fear by its very unreality, but it is miscalculated. These grotesques (including Diana Dors, overplaying wildly as a wicked housekeeper) are not quite absurd enough to be funny and too repellent to amuse. But the fire which is the adventure's climax is real enough, and handled with an almost Hitchcockian screwing of suspense. While it can be enjoyed in the comfortable conviction that all will come right in the end, the happy conclusion is withheld for an agonising length of time. This determination to get full value out of the material without dilution or sentimentality is perhaps the key to Jeffries' success. It is a compliment to child audiences which their parents will appreciate.

BRENDA DAVIES

Two Gallants

On bad days I think the telly critics have the best of it. There was the generally refreshing excellence of Granada's *Country Matters* and, some while ago now, those D. H. Lawrence adaptations. Mini-cinema, maybe, and a far cry from the ambitious productions of Italian RAI-TV, but straws in the wind for all that. Questions of scale apart, the days are past when one could confidently assign films made for the big and small screens to their respective pigeon-holes. The visual traffic is two-way. What one can say is that television increasingly offers chances to make subjects of a length considered unpalatable to cinema audiences. High time that the pick of these films—for what else are they but films?—got the further consideration they deserve.

Gavin Millar's *Two Gallants* is a case very much in point. It is the splendid first fruit of a new BBC-2 project trailered in the Autumn SIGHT AND SOUND's 'In the Picture': a series of 20-30 minute conversions of short stories drawn from Joyce's *Dubliners* and from Chekhov, to be co-produced by Gavin Millar and Melvyn Bragg and adapted and directed by various hands, some experienced, others new to the game. (Of *Full House*, the long, long arts magazine into which these brief features are now and then to be slotted, it is too early to say more than that it's terrible.) The Joyce story, written in 1906 and a late entry for the *Dubliners* collection, ran into particular trouble in its day from outraged printers and a nervous publisher. It wasn't till 1914, in fact, that the book finally appeared. Hindsight renders this caution ridiculous, but Millar must have had his own, quite different troubles in adapting the tale.

Terse, elegant, it follows two seedy blades through a turn-of-the-century Dublin evening: Corley, the thick, self-absorbed womaniser, and Lenehan, his fawning companion. In terms of plot, all hinges on a last disclosure, when smug Corley returns from an assignation with a besotted slavey to reveal his small, ungente-

manly spoils. The story beautifully builds to this (which is presumably what so dismayed those printers); its concern, though, is rather with the characters of its 'gallants' and, most notably, with a portrait of the eternal leech, Lenehan. Between the early boasting and buttering-up exchanges and the quick, final meeting, mission accomplished, Lenehan is left to his own poor devices. This is where Millar turns up trumps, both as adapter and director, making Lenehan's walkabout—window-gazing, relishing a plate of peas in a run-down refreshment bar, exchanging vacant pleasantries with acquaintances on the street—count for interest and insight into the man every step of the way.

Donal McCann is well found as the ladykiller delivering his judicious vulgarities ('She's a fine decent tart . . . that's what she is'); Derry Power, yachting cap, sly merriment, anxious eyes and all, is now inexpressibly Lenehan, his jauntiness a blink away from melancholy. Millar helps this astonishing performance by the attention he gives to Georgian locations (the 28-minute film was shot over nine nights) and by the magnificently subdued colour photography; a necessary male harpist and a tram were disinterred from God knows where. All the Joyce is here, and the juice. If I had to single out a couple more inspired strokes, I suppose they would be the use of an Offenbach overture, its febrile gaiety a perfect mirror of the prevailing tone, and the simple audacity of introducing a narrator's voice-over when the images can't go it alone. Gavin Millar is known to admire Truffaut, another director who doesn't scruple to avail himself of the full range of devices to a film-maker's hand. As one who mistrusts 'pure' cinema, being uncertain as to its meaning, I can only applaud this rich, subtle conversion which takes, to echo Lenehan, 'the solitary, unique, and if I may so call it, *recherché* biscuit!'

JOHN COLEMAN

London Festival 1972 from page 8

The *pièce de résistance*, for instance, is the school play, specially rewritten and designed to spread terror through the school. A wild and woolly amalgam of *Faust*, blasphemy and medical-student japey (whose main delight on the side is that it features a bizarre Hound of the Baskervilles which subsequently haunts the school by night with ferocious intent), it succeeds only in spreading alarm among the inoffensive younger boys, and has whatever teeth it possesses drawn by a round of indulgent applause from the assembled clergy. The rout is finally completed when Transeunti musters his troops for a grand alliance between pupils and servants, only to find them split by class and economic barriers.

The real sting comes in the tail when Transeunti, after making a last gesture by chopping down the 'miraculous pear-tree' in the garden with the assistance of an idiot servant who is obsessed by dreams of another planet, shakes the dust of the school off his feet, leaving it to sink comfortably back into its mire. Driving in a gleaming convertible down the deserted highway—no people to disrupt the beautiful simplicity of dreams—Transeunti asks the idiot beside him about his planet, and platitudes about a future Utopia mingle with his own pious hopes for order through power. With imagination and intellect equally bankrupt, what price a brave new world?

TOM MILNE

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PLEASURE DOME: The Collected Film Criticism of Graham Greene, 1935-1940

Edited by John Russell Taylor

SECKER AND WARBURG, £3.50

'Life as it is, life as it ought to be,' wrote Chekhov about the function of the novel. Graham Greene quotes this dictum three times in the course of his collected film reviews, applying it in each case to his ideal of cinema. His clarion call to the stars and studios of America and England during the Thirties when he was critic for the *Spectator* and *Night and Day* is for more reality, more accuracy—more truth, no less.

The Pleasure Dome would be interesting anyway for the light it throws on the creative obsessions of Greene the novelist, and later the screenwriter. At the time these reviews were being written he was himself struggling with life as it is, life as it ought to be, in the form of *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory* and *A Gun for Sale*. It is not surprising that he responds with such warmth to Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko*:

'In this film we do not forget the real subject in a mass of detail: the freedom loving human spirit trapped and pulling at the chain. A simple subject, but fiction does not demand complex themes, and the story of a man at liberty to move only in one shabby, alien quarter when his heart is in another place widens out to touch the experience of exile common to everyone . . . We are aware . . . of a film which is really trying to translate into dramatic terms the irrelevancies, the grotesque wit, the absurd, the passionate tangle of associations which make up the mind.'

This might be an enthusiastic review of one of Greene's own early novels. The preoccupations of his imagination, as we now know them with the gift of hindsight, appear forcibly, at times almost parodically. Writing in 1935 of the shortcomings of Technicolor, he says: 'It must be made to contribute to our sense of truth. The machine gun, the cheap striped tie, the battered Buick and the shabby bar . . . Can Technicolor reproduce with the necessary accuracy the suit that has been worn too long, the oily hat?'

Notice Greene's strenuous use of the definite article, and notice that 'must'; he is marking out his moral territory. In his philosophy, life as it ought to be often implies an inverted romanticism, a sentimental puritanism—qualities which

pollute so much of his fiction for me. It is as if there is something inherently more truthful and serious about the oily hat and the striped tie than about a crimson velvet ball dress.

He castigates the sentimentality and triviality of Hollywood with wit and ferocity, yet his most valuable gift as a critic is his understanding of the uniqueness of the cinema as an art: the way it combines popularity and privacy; its capacity to incorporate an audience in the action. Here he is, at his very best, on another Duvivier film, *Un Carnet de Bal*:

'Nostalgia, sentiment, regret: the padded and opulent emotions wither before the evil detail: the camera shoots at a slant so that the dingy flat rears like a sinking ship. You have to struggle to the door, but you can run down hill to the medical couch and the bead curtains.'

This is bravura descriptive writing, imaginative analysis and a poignant prophetic sketch for Greene's own screenplays written after the war. The pet snake flushed down the lavatory by the jealous butler's wife in *The Fallen Idol*; the eiderdowned crone squaling incomprehensible German at Holly Martins as she ascends the staircase in *The Third Man*—these are the evil details which harrow us in his scripts.

He is acute about Hitchcock, whom he justly accuses of an inadequate sense of reality: 'Very perfunctorily he builds up to . . . tricky situations (paying no attention on the way to inconsistencies, loose ends, psychological absurdities) and then drops them; they mean nothing: they lead to nothing.' He is wrong about Garbo: 'That magnificent mare's head of hers will puzzle our descendants seeking a more obvious beauty.' And he is no less than coarsely perverse about Shakespeare's (rather than Reinhardt's) *Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'I have little affection for the play, which seems to me to have been written with a grim determination on Shakespeare's part to earn for once a Universal Certificate.'

The articles are rarely longer than eight hundred words, and Greene manages the constrictions of his quota triumphantly: he is a consummate aphoristic journalist. But his jokes, like his extended comedies such as *Our Man in Havana* or *Travels with My Aunt*, are often laboured and immature. Except, that is, when they are creatively critical, as in his piece

about *The Petrified Forest*:

'Dramatise, dramatise,' one longs to remind Mr. Sherwood, as more and more the concrete fact—the gun, the desert, the killer—give place to Life, Love, Nature . . . it is as if Othello had met the armed men outside the door not with 'Put up your bright swords or the dew will rust them,' but with some such sentence as: 'Nature, my men, is having her revenge. You can't defeat Nature with your latest type of swords and daggers. She comes back every time in the shape of neuroses, jealousies . . . and had let Desdemona and the affairs of Venice, Iago and the one particular handkerchief, vanish before Women, Life, Sex . . .'

Students and aficionados of Greenery will be delighted by the references to their author's favourite authors, Chekhov, James, Ford Maddox Ford, which abound in the text, but any reader will be puzzled and irritated by the production of *The Pleasure Dome*. The index does not contain an entry for any of the three writers mentioned above. There is no contents page, and no editorial preface. Instead we have a black and white coffee-table book, scattered with otiose stills from the films under review, unwieldy and expensive. Better to wait for the paperback.

Greene himself contributes a brief but characteristically sly introduction. He stumbled upon his job, he tells us, 'after the dangerous third Martini.' He finds many of his prejudices 'modified now only by a sense of nostalgia.' This is an honest indictment of his failings, and substantiates my own feeling that though his criticism is consistently readable and occasionally profound, it is far from the achievements of James Agee, or of Pauline Kael and some others now writing. But we, of course, have hindsight, more time and a little more space. We are not yet Collected Works.

JULIAN JEBB

ALL THE BRIGHT YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN:

A Personal History of the Czech Cinema

By Josef Skvorecký

Translated by Michael Schonberg
PETER MARTIN ASSOCIATES/TAKE ONE,
TORONTO, \$8.95

After 1958 we all began to see films from Czechoslovakia that we admired. Soon we learned to rely on certain directors' names as guarantees of work with individuality and inventiveness, quite fresh voices on the international film scene. At first we watched for the signatures of Weiss and Zeman, then Jasný and Forman and Kadar, and then, finally (?), Chytilová and Némec and Passer and Menzel. Three years ago a curtain descended on this stage full of accomplishment and promise; we heard about films, shelved or stopped, that we would never see, and of Czech film-makers trying to continue their careers abroad.

Josef Skvorecký's book gives us fully, for the first time, the context for those films and their makers, how they came into being—and what was behind the descending curtain. After reading his book one can never again think of them as separate works and artists. They came from an intense and determined joint effort of Czech intellectuals, the history of which Skvorecký is peculiarly qualified to write, since he and his books occupied a key place in the past excited decade of Czech cinema. (In a separation that sounds strange to us, he mentions that his book does not pretend to describe the course of Slovak films, as he does not know the details of Bratislava's productions. As for Prague and the Barrandov Studio, he seems to know everything worth knowing.) Official opposition to his first novel, *The Cowards* (finally published in 1958, ten years after it was written), can be identified with the first significant collisions between authority and the 'daring young men and women' moving from the Film Academy into Barrandov. Skvorecký wrote five of the films and promoted others, unmade, as well as constantly prodding his film friends into their best efforts. What happened to them at home and in Prague's cafés is also a vital part of his story.

For prelude, Skvorecký gives a concise history of the Czech film before the last war, with fine, informal portraits of the great satirists then—Vlasta Burian, Voskovec and Werich, Hugo Haas. The years of German occupation, a time of feverish activity, are quietly passed over; he gives us only glimpses of the mistakes and victims of those years. He is eager to leave the 'Grandfathers and Fathers' (his first chapter) and get to his own generation.

The nationalisation of the film industry was the first step towards both triumphs and troubles. Within a few years the authorities were confronted by an irritating paradox: 'The State was financing its own critics.' It is possible that the State underestimated the social role of films. Backed by the creators of the country's literature, music and design, the power of the film was formidable: 'In Czechoslovakia, films and literature are not just entertainment on different levels of sophistication, nor are they the subject of snobbish conversation, as is all too frequently the case in the West. They play an important part in the lives of wide masses.' Skvorecký shows the gathering forces that became the 'Czech New Wave', the constant push-pull of artists versus administrators, the film studio's relation to changing political powers, those who played safe and those who risked everything in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put their beliefs on to film.

As this movement—one of the vital intellectual dramas of post-war Europe—took shape, the central information of this history is opened to us. Chapter Three,

'A Portrait of the Artists as Young Men and Women', begins with the struggling rise of Milos Forman, and the emergence of Forman's assistant, Ivan Passer. The next portrait is of Vera Chytilová, the philosopher film-maker and perhaps the boldest experimenter. We've heard little of Ester Krumbachová, but now we can see the important creative role she played as designer and writer. The most tragic of Skvorecký's portraits is of Jan Němec. His trials and anguish have turned the maker of *Diamonds in the Night* and *The Party and the Guests* into a helpless invalid, perhaps never again able to make any kind of film.

There are other directors in Skvorecký's book: Menzel (*Closely Watched Trains*), Schorm (*End of a Priest*), Jires (*The Cry*), Juracek (*Joseph Kilian*), Schmidt, Masa, Bocan, Brynych, Kachyna. What will such independent talents do, now that controls from the top have tightened so painfully? Skvorecký makes no prophecy, but he reminds us that the old antagonists of the young film-makers—inertia, silence and misused authority—have waited for this moment to pounce. Certainly the old taboos, to protect the audience from new forms, satire, ambiguity, are back in renewed force.

Sympathy and irony are the two dominant tones of Skvorecký's writing. There are sarcastic allusions to events—the Banská Bystrica conference, for example—that non-Czechs might have preferred to know about more concretely, especially as this took place on the eve of the triumphant years. Irony and local allusions are usually the first victims of translation. This clever, sharp book is blunted, to an unfortunate degree, by its translator, its editor and its proof-reader. Canada's film books are so rare that this could have been a model to follow if more care had been spent on 'unimportant' details. Nevertheless, for the patient and inquiring reader, this 'personal history' is a treasure.

JAY LEYDA

JEAN VIGO

By P. E. Salles Gomes

SECKER & WARBURG, £3.50 and £1.90

JEAN VIGO

By John M. Smith

NOVEMBER BOOKS, £1.70 and 85p.

Originally published in 1957, *Jean Vigo* by P. E. Salles Gomes has always been considered the definitive work on its subject, and it has been the starting point for almost all subsequent Vigo research. Several books have been published since 1957 (most recently Pierre Lherminier's study in the *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui* series), all relying for their factual information on the painstaking research of their Brazilian forerunner, now available for the first time in an English translation.

Salles Gomes tells the full story.

He begins with a chapter devoted to Vigo's father, the anarchist journalist Miguel Almereyda. For a reader anxious to reach the core of the book, this prelude may seem tiresome. Almereyda's bewildering succession of political vicissitudes and the maze of French radical politics prior to the Great War are, in themselves, of only minor importance to the later development of the child Vigo who lived through them. Considering the minutiae of Salles Gomes' findings, one is surprised that so little emerges of Vigo's own reactions (admittedly more difficult to ascertain) to this very unsettling period of his life.

The crucial schoolboy years at Millau and Chartres are chronicled in detail; but although this was the period later to be faithfully reconstructed in *Zéro de Conduite*, one may question the value of learning that, 'On the first day Jean was a bit uneasy and wondered how the other pupils would treat him and whether he would be well fed.' Such tiny anecdotal details, which pepper the book, eventually become merely an irritation. On the other hand, the accounts of the making of Vigo's films are both fascinating and illuminating. The problem-fraught machinery of small-budget production is here described down to the last light-meter. Every alteration to the script, each new approach, the inspired improvisations and subsequent deletions, provide a clear indication of Vigo's rigorous methods and unswerving ideology. And this is Salles Gomes' important contribution to our understanding.

As a critic, Salles Gomes functions best when confronted by the criticism of others. His attitude to Vigo is one of relentless admiration, but analysis of Vigo's 'poetry' (to which he continually refers) is reserved for one or two salient sequences. The book ends, however, with a lengthy review of the critical attention paid to Vigo's films; and in the very last pages, in a virtuoso demolition job on the 1949 views of Glauco Viazzi, Salles Gomes reveals the full force of a perception which until this point has been regrettably muted.

Where Salles Gomes dives into every nook and cranny of factual information, John M. Smith treads water in the dangerous eddies of hypothesis. Quite legitimately, he bases his judgments on the visual evidence of the films themselves; a method which, especially in Vigo's case, may however prove inadequate. He says almost nothing of the autobiographical importance of *Zéro de Conduite*, fails to acknowledge the crucial contribution of Boris Kaufman (Kaufman has stressed the unique creative partnership he shared with Vigo), and completely underestimates Vigo's own temperament and personality. Mr. Smith does make some valuable observations, but his determination to construe 'significance' from Vigo's imagery and thematic consistencies finally

leaves one gasping with incredulity.

Whatever the meaning of the hole in the road (towards the end of *A Propos de Nice*), it certainly is not 'the goal of the sexually searching chimneys.' Vigo prefers to expose his emotions through that 'physical honesty' which Mr. Smith correctly ascribes to the muscle-flexing torso in another sequence from the same film. Nor is the pile of logs (at the side of the canal in the opening sequences of *L'Atalante*) anything more than a pile of logs. To suggest that their implication as fuel 'establishes, on a plot level, the nature of the barge's calling near the village' is simply pedantic. The book is bedevilled with similarly misleading and unfounded suggestions. Are we to believe, for example, that the sea-plane in *A Propos de Nice* is unable to take flight because it is a figment of the 'sterile' imagination of the man who 'sees' it? Or that the atrocious acting of the assistant principal towards the end of *Zéro de Conduite* (which even Vigo's direction can do nothing to conceal) indicates the character's recognition of the boys' revolt as 'a victory for his own best impulses'? Interpretations such as these could surely be extended ad infinitum. Might we one day hope to find some structural significance in the usherette's tray?

Mr. Smith's findings might be said to complement those of Salles Gomes. But having read

the earlier of the two books, it is difficult to give credence to the other. Salles Gomes, together with the many published testimonies of friends and acquaintances, at least gives us a fair indication of Vigo's character. Knowing this, and accepting the evidence of the films, it is hard not to find Mr. Smith's subcutaneous analysis cold, distant and disconcertingly off the mark.

If the two books finally coincide, it is in their inability to come to grips with Vigo's surrealism. Salles Gomes thrusts the idea firmly aside in a few lines; Mr. Smith never tackles it. And yet the films of Jean Vigo, through their articulation of what Paul Eluard called 'l'évidence poétique', constitute a dazzling confirmation of the power revolt, the realisation of desire, and the existence of the marvellous. 'The surrealists' ideal,' to quote J. H. Matthews in *Surrealism and Film*, 'is the attainment of aspirations which current circumstances combine to deny us. This entails a review of reality, a revised sense of what is real. Even when they do not address themselves to the question of the role of the real in films, at the source of the concept of cinematographic poetry defended by all surrealists is anticipation of "une réalité réhaussée": reality raised to a new level of significance, more in accord with the inner needs of man.'

BRIAN MILLS

D. W. Griffith

His Life and Work

ROBERT MORTON HENDERSON

This book traces the rise and fall of the complex and flamboyant artist who transformed the movie industry from a novelty attraction to a powerful entertainment medium. D. W. Griffith produced and directed *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance*, *Broken Blossoms*, and *Orphans of the Storm*. He launched Mary Pickford, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Lionel Barrymore, and other stars. But he ended his film career in obscurity, isolated from the industry he had helped to create.

145 photographs £3

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

THE INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF FILM

MICHAEL JOSEPH, £7.00

THE WORLD ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF FILM

STUDIO VISTA, £6.25

Apart from Peter Graham's useful little *Dictionary of the Cinema*, there has been no English language equivalent of the massive Italian *Filmlexicon* or the various and variously useful French compendia. The English-speaking cineaste wanting to check a title or a date or a director has had to thumb through a number of limited and often conflicting sources, like the industry year books, the Spring Books pictorial histories, and more recently the index to Andrew Sarris' *American Cinema*. Now the gap is filled twofold, with the

almost simultaneous publication of two general encyclopaedias.

The *World* encyclopaedia, seven years in the making, claims to be 'the most comprehensive film encyclopaedia available in any language.' It depends, of course, on what you mean by 'comprehensive', and the claim begins to seem a little misleading when the editors, Tim Cawkwell and John M. Smith (the work was initiated by Ian Cameron, who has since left Studio Vista), admit in their introduction that the silent cinema is under-represented and the focus is on the 'choice of directors'. The *International* encyclopaedia makes no such claim, and indeed its scope and its purpose are different: a general encyclopaedia which aims at readability as well as usefulness as a work of reference. The tone is set in the introductory essay by the general editor (Roger

Manvell), a potted history of the cinema which finds its echo in the main body of the work in general articles on animation, Indian film and the development of colour cinematography (a long and valuable essay by Brian Coe).

The difference between the two books can perhaps best be illustrated by a comparative exercise. Look up Mitchell Leisen in the *World* encyclopaedia and you find a seventeen-line biography and a complete filmography; the adjoining entries include Janet Leigh, Roger Leenhardt and Jean-Pierre L  f  vre (which the *International* spells Lef  bre). The *International* gives Leisen twenty-two lines, describing his 'smoothly sophisticated ironic style' and mentioning only six of his films; neither Janet Leigh nor Roger Leenhardt are listed on the same pages, but there is an entry for Lebanon referring

the reader to a page-long article on Arab film.

In other words, the usefulness of these encyclopaedias depends on the use you want to make of them. The *World* volume provides a detailed biography of D. W. Griffith and a complete list of his films after 1914; but turn to the *International* if you want to know the basics of Griffith's style and technical innovations. Both volumes include a number of errors (sloppy proof-reading responsible for a lot of them in the *World*); the *International* is better designed (one picture often says as much as a thousand words, and the *International* has more scope for displaying stills to advantage); the *World* is more useful as a work of reference, and has a better index. At current prices, both encyclopaedias are good value for money.

DAVID WILSON

Letters

Capra Revisited

SIR,—A season of Frank Capra films opens shortly at the National Film Theatre in the wake of the English publication of Capra's autobiography, *The Name Above the Title*. Many of the reviews of the book in this country were less than ecstatic, possibly as a reaction to the rather gushing praise that the work has gathered in the United States. Unfortunately there has been a general tendency, particularly noticeable in Elliott Stein's article 'Capra Counts His Oscars' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer, 1972) to denigrate much of Capra's film career along with his literary efforts.

First, as to the book itself, anybody who looks for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in any autobiography, be it written by politician, sportsman or film director, is destined to disappointment. The fact that Capra misremembers interviews with Harry Cohn, and errs in his recall of casting and in his labelling of captions, should not be considered surprising. The rigorous standard of scholarship cannot really be applied to a work of personal reminiscence, however much one may wish it. When Mr. Stein castigates Capra's 'solipsistic reveries' and then immediately asks us to compare them to Bob Thomas' anecdotal *King Cohn*, one can but wonder at his definition of an acceptable film book.

One sometimes feels that Mr. Stein in his review is trying to rewrite Capra in this journalistic fashion. In the middle of a list of

Capra's literary shortcomings he bemoans the destruction of the first two reels of *Lost Horizon* because these '... involved the burning of Baskul, perhaps the greatest action sequence the man filmed.' How, one may rightly inquire, was this judgment arrived at, since only the audiences at the studio and Santa Barbara previews could conceivably have known the content, let alone the quality, of the first half-hour?

Apart from these instances of eccentricity, Mr. Stein's most serious mistake is to align the book's predictable egocentricity with a similar tendency in Capra's movies, implying that, since in literary terms the pretentiousness is offensive, the movies themselves suffer from similar excesses. This is a familiar simplification worn thin by popularisers. To prove his point Mr. Stein falls into the elementary academic trap of quoting out of context. He is of the opinion that after *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, Capra 'would never again be capable of a film as funny as *The Strong Man*, as lovable as *Rain or Shine*, as tastefully erotic as *Platinum Blonde*, as great as *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*... or simply as exciting as *Dirigible*.' To justify these assertions he quotes Alistair Cooke's review of *Mr. Deeds* (recently republished in *Garbo and the Nightwatchmen*) in which Cooke felt Capra was '... on his way out; he's started to make films about themes instead of about people.'

But Cooke went on to cite as an example of what Capra had forsaken, the sequence in *Broadway Bill* where Dan exchanges his cane for a hamburger, to the disgust of the stall proprietor, whereupon Happy remarks, 'Whaddya expect for a hamburger—a telegraph pole?' Mr. Stein ignores *Broadway Bill* altogether, presumably because its artistic deficiencies upset his thesis.

One can hardly believe that Mr. Stein is serious in his preference for rarely seen trivia to acknowledged masterpieces. No doubt in

a similar situation he would contend that the derivative, tedious early works of Shakespeare are unjustly neglected and that after 1595 the writer would never again be capable of something as hilarious as *Love's Labour's Lost* or simply as exciting as *Henry VI Part I*. The five films that Capra made between 1936 (*Mr. Deeds*) and 1941 (*Meet John Doe*) will remain classic examples of the successful attempt to blend entertainment and serious endeavour within the rigorous framework of a commercial industry. As a result of these movies Capra will surely rank as perhaps the most important American film-maker of the 1930s. Better than any of his contemporaries, he captured on film a national mood and conveyed it with sincerity, if also with sentiment. This explains why his post-war efforts never achieved the success that seemed to be his by right during the Thirties. Removed from the social and economic conditions that had given significant impetus to his films, Capra tried to stem the tide of history and was surprised when he failed. *It's a Wonderful Life* spends most of its time in flashback as if the director were afraid to come to grips with the present, while *Riding High* and *A Pocketful of Miracles* were unhappy remakes of earlier successes.

Had Capra in fact continued to make *Rain or Shines* and *Dirigibles*, can one really believe that he would have been anything other than a competent director of undistinguished pictures? By denying Capra his 'conceit' Mr. Stein is cutting off his nose to spite his face. Not even Edward Arnold, Mr. Stein, would wish that fate on you.

Yours faithfully,
Cambridge COLIN SHINDLER

Eisenstein's English

SIR,—Lotte Eisner's point about Eisenstein as linguist (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn, 1972): of course Eisenstein spoke fluently in Rus-

sian, German, French, English and Spanish. He read exhaustively and with complete understanding in all five. (And had a smattering of Japanese.) His writing in any of them is not so hot, especially when he was in a hurry or searching for new categories of aesthetic expression, for he sometimes seemed to be thinking in all of them at once and continually extending and adapting words to embody new meanings.

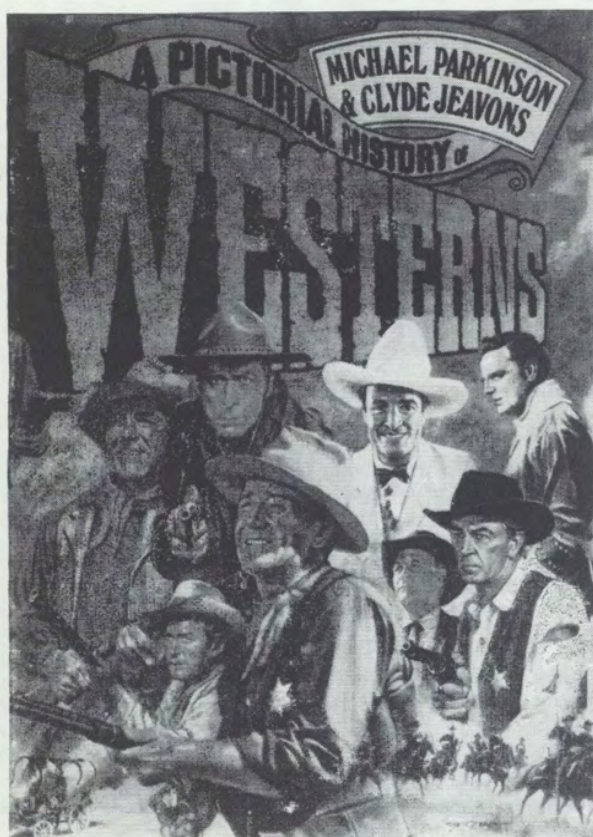
Once I remember two old ladies, who called after a lecture he had given for the University of Southern California, saying how interesting it had been, but that it would have been still more interesting if it had been in English. Of course it had been in English, and brilliantly eloquent at that—but no doubt had included a great many aesthetic, philosophic and scientific terms which the old ladies (and in a few cases perhaps everyone) had never heard uttered before. I well remember his going out to spend a day (or was it an evening?) with Capra, and very much looking forward to it and enjoying it because Capra was a man whose work he very much admired. In his enthusiasm he may well have taken the brakes off and it may have had the same effect as on the old ladies. But pidgin—no. This in no language.

Yours faithfully,
IVOR MONTAGU
Garston, Watford, Herts.

Movie Gallery

SIR,—Because it is fashionable to give immediate praise and publicity to the work of Henri Langlois, there is a tendency to push into the background the work of others in the same field. David Robinson's report on Langlois' Mus  e du Cin  ma was interesting, but I would like to point out that there has been in Los Angeles for some years now a similar exhibition, and regrettably few know of its existence.

The exhibition is the Movie Gallery at the Los Angeles County



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Museum of Natural History on Exposition Boulevard, which was set up by the Museum's Associate Curator of American Western History, John Dewar. I will not attempt to express the visual charm of the Gallery, but content myself with listing some of the items on display. Aside from such mundane items as Vitaphone discs, original posters, lobby cards, early Walter Lantz and Disney cels, Edison Kinetoscopes and original costume designs, the visitor may view original items from *The Lost World*, including background sketches for the scenic artists; one of the ape models used in *King Kong*; Technicolor's first 3-strip camera; Chaplin's costume from *Modern Times*; Lon Chaney's make-up kit and his costume from *The Penalty*; Marie Dressler's costume from *Anna Christie*; Harold Lloyd's spectacles; Shirley Temple's shoes; Fred Astaire's tap shoes from *Top Hat*; Mae Murray's costumes from *The Merry Widow*; Mary Pickford's costume from *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*, not to mention her curls (!); letters from W. K. L. Dickson concerning his association with Edison (not noted, incidentally, by Gordon Hendricks); original sketches by the co-founder of the Vitagraph Company, J. Stuart Blackton; a model of the railroad station used in the Charles Laughton version of *Ruggles of Red Gap*; etc., etc., etc.

Apart from the material on display, the Museum also has a vast

quantity of books, programmes, posters and stills, which would put to shame the collections of many archives.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY SLIDE

Kingston upon Thames, Surrey.

John Grierson

SIR,—With the approval of Mrs. Grierson, I am preparing a biography of her late husband, John Grierson, founder of the British documentary movement and of the National Film Board of Canada. It will be published by Faber & Faber.

I would be grateful to see any letters or papers concerning him, which will be treated with care and quickly returned. Relevant material from friends and associates will be particularly welcome.

Yours faithfully,
H. FORSYTH HARDY

14 Greenhill Gardens,
Edinburgh 10.

Edgar Wallace and King Kong

SIR,—I am surprised that Mr. Basil Copper in his letter in your Autumn issue goes to such lengths to defend Edgar Wallace against Mr. Merian Cooper's charge that 'not a single idea' of Wallace's was used in the film *King Kong*.

If Edgar Wallace needs a defence, a second-hand bookshop is the place to find it. In June 1927, Edgar Wallace published *The Avenger*. One of the stars of this amazing tale is a very emotional

orang-outang who not only ascends buildings but chases swooning young ladies. A dead ringer, in fact, for the enlarged ape featured some few years later in a film Edgar Wallace is known to have been connected with.

I am no film historian like Mr. Copper, still less am I an ex-employee of Radio-Keith-Orpheum like Mr. Cooper; I am just someone who for years has enjoyed reading Mr. Wallace's preposterous stories. In this capacity, I offer *The Avenger* as proof that its author's ideas were well used by whoever wrote *King Kong*.

Yours faithfully,
MALCOLM GLUCK
London, N.6

Sight and Sound

As announced in the Autumn 1972 issue, the price of SIGHT AND SOUND was to be increased from January, 1973. Because of the Government's prices and incomes standstill, this increase has been postponed for U.K. subscribers. Annual subscribers in the U.K. who have already paid at the increased rate will be credited with 30p against their next subscription. Alternatively, a refund will be given if requested.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-WARNER for *A Safe Place*, *The Candidate*, *Jeremiah Johnson*.
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20TH CENTURY-FOX for *Sleuth*.
20TH CENTURY-FOX/UNIFRANCE for *Le Charme discret de la Bourgeoise*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Bad Company*, *Duel*, photograph of Adolph Zukor.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES/NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *The Scarlet Empress*, *Dishonoured*, *Blonde Venus*, *Morocco*, *The Devil is a Woman*.
WARNER BROS./NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *White Heat*, *A Distant Trumpet*.
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GEISSLER, BERLIN/DIVINA, MUNICH/MEGA, ROME/MARIO TURSI for *Ludwig II*.
SVERIGES RADIO for *Niklas Onskedjur*, *Krumeluren*, *The Christmas Calendar*.
JORN DONNER PRODUCTIONS for *Poor Marja*.
FILMINOR for *A Worker's Diary*, *Viapori—Castle of Finland*.
FILMINOR/FJ FILMI for *Rally*,

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The Count.

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JUN MIKI/BBC-TV for photograph of Akira Kurosawa.
NICOLETTA ZALAFFI for photograph of Teinosuke Kinugasa.
SATYAJIT RAY for *Company Limited*, *The Adversary*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Lost and Found on a South Sea Island*, *What Price Glory*, *From Now On*, *The Big Trail*, *East of Suez*, *Exquisite Sinner*, photographs of Raoul Walsh in the 20s, Margaret Rutherford, Maurice Chevalier, Akim Tamiroff.

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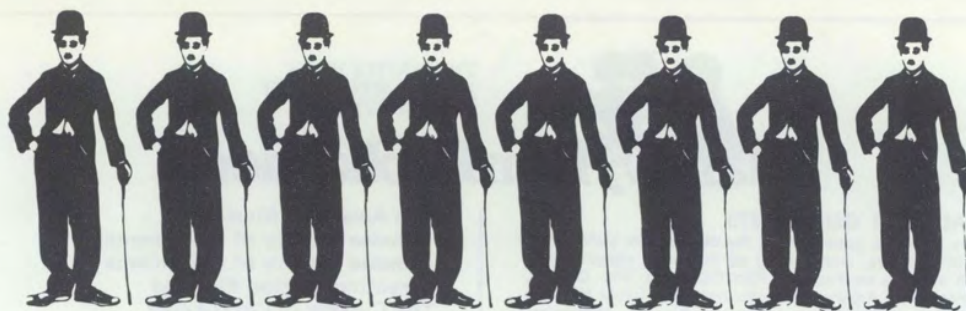
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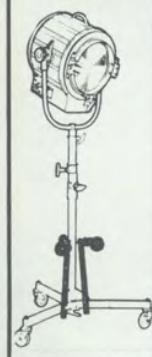
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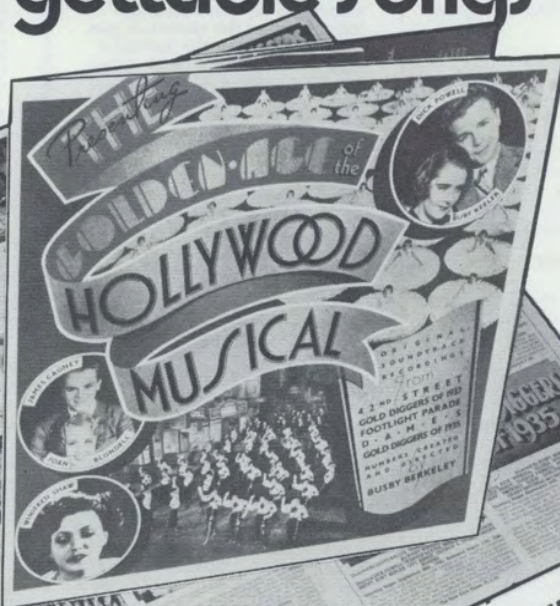
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FILM GUIDE

**AGNUS DEI

(Academy/Connoisseur)

Jancsó on the Hungarian plain, with soldiers, horses, epileptic priests and naked girls choreographed into a kind of mystery play about the continuity of fanaticism and unreason. An oppressive, difficult, sometimes baffling extension of Jancsó's mental landscape (*Red Psalm* is much more accessible), shot with a spectacularly circling camera. (József Madarasz, Márk Zala, Daniel Olbrychski.)

*ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND (Fox)

Blithely ignoring Jonathan Miller's post-Freudian TV *Alice*, William Sterling's musical version is mainly for the kids. The songs are uniformly unmemorable, but there is compensation in colourful sets and an entertainingly star-studded cast, especially Michael Hordern's lachrymose Mock Turtle. (Fiona Fullerton, Ralph Richardson, Peter Sellers.)

**AMAZING MR. BLUNDEN, THE (Hemdale)

A ghost story for children with an almost Dickensian flavour. Lionel Jeffries again shows a sure touch with youngsters, though his villains (including Diana Dors) are much larger than life. (Laurence Naismith, James Villiers, Dorothy Alison.) *Reviewed.*

BEN (Cinerama)

Sequel to *Willard* in which the rat pack set out on a city-wide rampage. Phil Karlson sketches the social terror in a few terse night-time encounters and a final holocaust of fire and water, but the thriller takes a back seat to some maudlin plotting. (Lee Harcourt Montgomery, Joseph Campanella.)

**CANDIDATE, THE

(Columbia-Warner)

Robert Redford as the liberal ideal, not so much corrupted as turned to marshmallow by the merchandising processes of an election campaign. Michael Ritchie's ironic play on the surfaces of his subject suggests just where the ice is thinnest, but with its sidelong glances at real life politicking, the film is eventually overtaken by the kind of dissipation that undermines its hero. (Peter Boyle, Melvyn Douglas.) *Reviewed.*

CROSS AND THE SWITCH-BLADE, THE (Fox)

Country preacher descends on the Bronx to sort out teenage gangs, the drugs problem and sundry local difficulties. Honourable intentions ill served by a script which too complacently takes religious salvation for a panacea. (Pat Boone, Erik Estrada, Jackie Giroux; director, Don Murray.)

**DEATH LINE (Rank)

A striking, stylish horror film which locates its dark deeds inspirationally in the London Underground, where a scabby monster terrorises late-night passengers to Russell Square. Measured direction and sombre photography keep absurdity at bay, while above ground Donald Pleasence's tetchy police inspector provides well-judged comic relief. (Norman Rossington, David Ladd; director, Barry Sherman.)

**DUEL (CIC)

Man pits his wits (miserably blunted by civilisation) and his machinery (which will take him just so far) against the irrational violence of a King Kong-type road hog. Contemporary phobias are wickedly honed to the point of the film's one outlandish conflict, with precision the keynote in script, direction and Dennis Weaver's hounded urbanite. (Director, Steven Spielberg.) *Reviewed.*

**DYN AMO (Other Cinema)

Steve Dwoskin's hallucinatory meditation on women as sex objects. Intense, anxious and progressively disturbing as the mostly static camera strips the masks from four faces of women. (Linda Marlowe, Jenny Runacre.)

**FELLINI'S ROMA

(United Artists)

Fellini's episodic essay on the eternal city, with all the familiar preoccupations on parade, and all the gusto and egotism. Some dazzling, characteristic sequences, including the wartime music hall, the excavation of a subterranean Roman villa, and the motorbike night ride.

*FUZZ (United Artists)

Engaging though not wholly successful Ed McBain burlesque, with cops disguised as nuns, police dogs who won't give chase and Raquel Welch sharing a sleeping bag in a stake-out. The violence doesn't jell with the slapstick, which overshadows McBain's procedural detail, but there are some funny moments. (Burt Reynolds, Jack Weston; director, Richard Colla.)

GLASS HOUSE, THE

(Scotia-Barber)

Prison melodrama so heavily loaded that good guys and bad guys flaunt their allegiance like lapel-buttons. Made for TV, and striving to say something significant about the system, it gets little further than the inevitable (and suitably muted) male gang-bang by courtesy of *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. (Alan Alda, Vic Morrow, Kristoffer Tabori; director, Tom Gries.)

**IMAGES (Hemdale)

Robert Altman depicts a woman succumbing to schizophrenia through a series of crystalline images which make no distinction between hallucination and 'reality'. The disquieting atmosphere of contagious insanity is rather vitiated by an overly schematic structure, but pictures here speak louder than ideas. (Susannah York, Rene Auberjonois.) *Reviewed.*

INNOCENT BYSTANDERS

(Scotia-Barber)

Crisp but formula postscript to the spy thriller cycle, with sundry agents on the trail of a missing Russian scientist and the familiar Cook's tour of locations. Peter Collinson for once directs without excess, but that's the only novelty. (Stanley Baker, Geraldine Chaplin, Dana Andrews.)

*JEREMIAH JOHNSON

(Columbia-Warner)

Ex-soldier flees from 19th century civilisation and graduates in the Rocky Mountains wilderness from greenhorn trapper to semi-legendary hero. Sydney Pollack's characteristic humour and mock-epic grandeur barely compensate for a sad lack of detail and a rambling storyline. (Robert Redford, Will Geer, Stefan Gierasch.) *Reviewed.*

KANSAS CITY BOMBER

(MGM-EMI)

Raquel Welch as a roller derby queen torn between Love, Duty as a Mother, and the Big Time. Her sufferings, for which the terrible

script is as much to blame as anything, leave mercifully little time for the absurd exposé of the string-pulling that supposedly goes on behind the scenes in this mysterious sport. (Kevin McCarthy; director, Jerrold Freedman.)

LADY CAROLINE LAMB

(MGM-EMI)

Robert Bolt's trivialising approach to period wastes a potentially intriguing subject. His notorious heroine, notching up her glamorous conquests, comes over as a kind of early 19th century groupie, and the portrayal is rivalled for vulgarity by Richard Chamberlain's masquerade matinee idol of a Byron. (Sarah Miles, Jon Finch.)

*LIFE AND TIMES OF JUDGE ROY BEAN, THE

(Cinerama)

Instant folklore from John Huston. A two-hour Western burlesque, strongly reminiscent of *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* but overblown and self-indulgent. The title role looks a little heavy on Paul Newman, who gets upstaged by a bear. (Stacy Keach, Ava Gardner, Anthony Perkins.) *Reviewed.*

**LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON

(Gala)

Rohmer's *L'Amour, l'Après-Midi* under its borrowed English title. The sixth and last moral tale, rounding off the cycle of chance and choice with Frédéric, the happily married man, and his afternoons with Chloe. Subtle, absorbing, Rohmerian. (Bernard Verley, Zouzou.) *Reviewed.*

MADE (MGM-EMI)

The trials of a South London working girl, coping with her fatherless child, an ill and demanding mother, the persistently good intentions of a young minister and some brief joy with a drifting pop singer. Sociological pertinence and melodramatic decline and fall offset one another to poor advantage. (Carol White, John Castle, Roy Harper; director, John Mackenzie.)

**MAGIC DONKEY, THE

(Target)

Jacques Demy's *Peau d'Ane*, a finely decorated fairytale which works some effective sidelong changes on the mood of Perrault's original. But literal fairytale material actually forestalls some of the Demy magic in a film least successful when its director is trying most to be himself. (Catherine Deneuve, Jean Marais, Delphine Seyrig.)

**MILLHOUSE, A WHITE COMEDY (VPS)

Items from the life and times of Richard Milhous Nixon, who emerges with little credit and less credibility in Emile de Antonio's jaundiced collage. Often devastating, but it's not quite the hatchet job it might have been, and the President is obviously impervious.

OFFENCE, THE

(United Artists)

The offence is that the claustrophobia of a John Hopkins play—with its harrowing turnabout of roles between policeman and suspect during an interrogation—has been frittered away into melodramatic banality. Superb performance, though, from Ian Bannen in a cast otherwise surprisingly at sea. (Sean Connery, Trevor Howard, Vivien Merchant; director, Sidney Lumet.)

OTHER, THE (Fox)

Childish imagination runs amok during the endless summer of '35—a dead twin is called up to play the part of wicked alter ego, grandmother plays with personality projection, and an ancestral curse vies with family madness. Robert Mulligan's generous attention to

detail and atmosphere is stretched to cover every homicidal aberration and intimation of doom. (Uta Hagen, Chris Udvornoky, Martin Udvarnoky.)

POPE JOAN (Columbia-Warner)

How a 9th century preacher's daughter came to sit on St. Peter's throne, use womanly intuition to settle diplomatic dilemmas, and finally be seduced by the Holy Roman Emperor. A tall story, and as Michael Anderson stodgily directs it, no one could possibly believe it. (Liv Ullmann, Trevor Howard, Maximilian Schell.)

PRECINCT 45—

LOS ANGELES POLICE

(Columbia-Warner)

George C. Scott and Stacy Keach prowling the LA streets in a patrol car, observing the diverse faces of human corruption and having their lives slowly blighted in the process. Despite an injection of fashionable chase sequences, it isn't *The French Connection*—or even the 87th Precinct. (Director, Richard Fleischer.)

RAGMAN'S DAUGHTER, THE

(Fox)

Alan's Sillitoe's story of a working-class drifter and his thieving partnership with the *nouveau riche* girl who comes along for the ride. Uneven, disruptively updated, and blighted by a lyrical haze which blots out the social observation and leaves the Nottingham settings looking like anywhere and nowhere. (Simon Rouse, Victoria Tennant; director, Harold Becker.)

**RUPTURE, LA (Contemporary)

Chabrol observes the power of love to conquer whatever warps human minds and feelings—drugs, power, money, greed—through a chilling yet compassionate tale of a mother's fight to retain custody of her young son and her sanity. Stéphane Audran superb as the mother, but the concluding flights of psychedelic fantasy are somewhat less felicitous. (Jean-Pierre Cassel, Michel Bouquet.)

SALZBURG CONNECTION, THE

(Fox)

Absurd adaptation of Helen MacInnes' best-selling thriller about a treasure chest of Nazi secrets. A multitude of agents buzz round pretty Salzburg locations trying to avoid the tourists, and somewhere in the crowd sense and credibility get irretrievably lost. (Barry Newman, Anna Karina; director, Lee H. Katzin.)

**SOUNDER (Fox)

Echoes of Gorki's *Out in the World* in Martin Ritt's look at poor Southern farmers in the 1930s. Occasionally flawed by liberal moralising, but held together by gritty authenticity, excellent playing from mainly black cast, and strikingly shot landscapes. (Paul Winfield, Cicely Tyson, Kevin Hooks.)

*TRIPLE ECHO, THE

(Hemdale)

Michael Apted's version of H. E. Bates' story begins with cliché rurality (jolly woodwind music, Mummerst accents) and ends in high melodrama, but in between settles into a sensitive account of a precarious wartime romance. Good performances all round, with Oliver Reed enjoying himself hugely as the wolfish sergeant. (Glenda Jackson, Brian Deacon.)

**WHEN THE LEGENDS DIE (Fox)

Strikingly gentle, quizzical adaptation of Hal Borland's novel about an Indian mountain boy (Frederic Forrest) who becomes a rodeo star and finds himself trapped between the old ways and the new. Stunning performance by Richard Widmark as the ageing cowboy who both befriends and destroys him. (Luana Anders; director, Stuart Miller.)



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